

## **DOCTORAL THESIS**

### **Signifying the body: nation, sport and the cultural analysis of Pierre Bourdieu**

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**Signifying the body:**  
**nation, sport and the cultural analysis of Pierre Bourdieu**

by

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## Abstract

The present study is an interrogation of theories of culture and nation in the context of spectacular sports. It proposes a view of nationalism as discourses that articulate and produce nations through narrative acts. A wide array of concepts and tools are drawn from the work of Pierre Bourdieu and contrasted with methods and notions from discursive and semiotic analysis to interrogate a national-sports *nexus* in which sports are vehicles to embody nations, their matrices of thought and perception, and their dominant order of masculinity and heteronormativity in the national subject, so that this order appears natural and commonsensical. Particular attention is given to the case of South Africa's participation in the 1998 World Cup, and the way the epic *genre* was employed to frame the event and produce a particular kind of national body.

Spectacular sports events provide nations with opportunities to disseminate narratives that regulate desire and conjure a particular kind of national fantasy – what Bourdieu referred to as *illusio* – in subjects. This work makes a distinction between an epic body of nationalism, a body enmeshed in "the natural and authentic," and an excessive body. However, mediations of sports are never merely reflections of social events but themselves participate in producing these events as meaningful and anchor them as national. Furthermore, an actively interpreting subject is required for the production of meaning, and in this regard the thesis offers a critique of Bourdieu's limited view on what it entails for a recipient of nationalist discourse to be active. The questions addressed by this study is twofold: how and what kind of national order of the body and desire is manufactured through spectacular sports events, and how are mediations of such events made meaningful in subjects?

The open-ended character of signification means that beneath the level of nationalist anchorage of spectacular sports events other articulations are possible. Drawing on Bourdieu's view of sports as forms of silent *dressage*, the thesis suggests that there is a potential excess of meaning that enables such events to become potential sites of subjective truth: as viewers realise the fantasmatic character of such mediations they may come to question the notion that spectacular sports are something more than just a game.

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## List of acronyms

ANC	African National Congress
FIFA	<i>Fédération Internationale de Football Association</i>
IOC	International Olympic Committee
NFF	<i>Norges Fotballforbund</i> (Norwegian Soccer Association)
NPSL	National Professional Soccer League
NRK	<i>Norsk Rikskringkasting</i> (Norwegian Broadcasting Company)
SABC	South African Broadcasting Company
SAFA	South African Soccer Association
SASF-PL	South African Soccer Federation Professional League
UEFA	Union of European Soccer Associations



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## **1. Introduction: Making meaning of sports**

Sports may be inserted into a number of knowledge contexts. When someone says, “I know football” we generally take that to mean that we are speaking to a person who knows not only the rules of football, but also has some experience of playing the game. Knowing football may also include familiarity with an esoteric set of records associated with the game – well-known players and managers, winners of important games, knowledge of significant events, and so on – and with an increasingly specialised set of expert knowledges; psychological applications to football, biological applications, sociological and philosophical knowledges, and so forth (Bourdieu, “Sports fan” 342-345; Foucault, “Discourse on language” 224; Shumway and Messer-Davidow 203-208). Not all of these knowledges are subject to the strictures of academic knowledge regimes, but at least one of them has an element that remains beyond words. As a form of practical competence, football constitutes a way of knowing with the body that can only be verbalised with some effort, since it is to a large extent taught silently, transferred from the teacher’s body to the body of the student, without ever reaching the level of verbal utterances (Bourdieu, “Program” 160).

This is a study of sport, and particularly football, as a cultural phenomenon. While the term discipline may usefully be applied to football in a number of ways – indicating how the body is ordered or trained to master the sport, how the game can be approached or mastered from the perspective of a number of academic fields, or how the attainment of a specialist knowledge entails the attainment of discipline (Shumway and Messer-Davidow 203) – cultural studies is the academic field in which this study is situated.<sup>1</sup> Specifically, our concern is with how we know *with* our bodies and how they are made knowable to us through a

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<sup>1</sup> For a thorough discussion of the use of the term discourse in the work of Ernesto Laclau in relation to a broader Cultural Studies – most often to be understood as that of John Mowitt (see Bowman). Against the fetishisation of “alterity” criticised by Stuart Hall and others, Bowman (p. 203) proposes to distinguish between work “that is unproblematically disciplinary versus work that is interruptive”

particular kind of matrix, namely that which has been formed to cultivate a deeply embedded sense of national belonging in us. When inculcated through sports this matrix may be referred to as the national-sports nexus, the term adopted in this study.

Nationalism, writes Benedict Anderson, is impressive not so much in that it affords people something to live for, as that it is a concept for which millions are willing to die (*Imagined Communities* 6). Nationalist narratives tell stories of deep horizontal comradeships among their members. Taking the place of the great religious systems, nations endow our lives with a meaning that stretches beyond our individual life spans. Nations conjure images of themselves as harking back to immemorial times and stretching into a limitless future while in actuality they are temporal, limited entities. Such national narratives and national ways of perceiving, thinking and acting have become naturalised and are often taken for granted or accepted as an essential part of our being.

This study is situated at the intersection of sport and national narratives. It is concerned with the ways in which nations make use of sports to constitute themselves as essential human attributes rather than contingent social formations. Sports are vehicles to entrench the nation as a matrix in our habitual engagement with the world. Through sports the nation becomes a way of perceiving, thinking and acting in the world. We are trained, taught, and – finally – disciplined to regard the nation as an attribute of what it means to be a human being as natural as “having a nose and two ears” (Gellner 6).

We are centrally concerned with questions of meaning and significance. Nations make use of sports to manufacture distinctions between desirable and unwanted bodies, gender performances and sexualities. However, such mediations of desire are made meaningful only at the moment of reception, and this study argues for an actively interpreting subject of national discourses. Our central research questions are: (1) How and what kind of national

order of desire is manufactured through spectacular sports events? and (2) How are mediations of such events produced as meaningful to subjects?

### **National sport and the gaze**

In order to advance in answering these questions, we need to make some important distinctions. Sports have become part of our lives in two different but closely related ways. Most of us have at least some experience of practising a sport and the training that is entailed in mastering it. Napoleon dreamt of solidifying his empire with the use of a national discipline (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 169), and physical education as a nation-wide subject is part of nation states' efforts in promoting bodies that have a shared frame of reference in their physical training, in other words, to mould national subjects.

We experience sports in a different way as well: as mass mediated spectacles performed by elite athletes. Even if the sport may be familiar to us through our own practice of it, the way it is performed, the level of achievement and excellence, and the stakes of the contest make the game so alien to us that we are reduced to passive comprehension (Bourdieu, "Program" 160). The further the distance between our own experience of practising the game and the sport as it is presented to us through the mass media, the greater the chance that audiences will be content with cheering for "their" team, taking delight in its successes, and what Bourdieu calls extrinsic aspects of the game, such as the gains of winning or losing.

Mass mediated sports are therefore centrally about training the body in a different sense: it is about training the eye, instructing us how to observe sports, and to coordinate our gaze with the pleasures we derive from watching. While the kind of disinterested observer we find in Kant's writing on aesthetics is incompatible with the rousing of emotions favoured by

modern sport spectacles, there is an analogous incongruity in the application of the gaze in the two modes of observation. While the former favours a pure gaze acquired through a kind of implicit learning, enabling the viewer to sift out all things that may serve to rouse the kinds of passions and emotions “ordinary” people experience in their “ordinary” existence (Bourdieu, *Distinksjonen* 48-49), the latter takes pleasure in a drowning of consciousness and allowing their emotions to be agitated, and may therefore make use of the gaze to seek out precisely those things that stir up emotions. The way the gaze is exercised in spectacular sports reinforces social orchestration: by structuring how audiences observe, these events strengthen and reproduce bodily and collective mimesis (Bourdieu, “Logic” 167). We are directed to observe particular events and trained to imitate them – if not expressly with our bodies, then as recollections of past practice – and in so doing our habits are formed outside conscious awareness.

There is a third way to train the gaze. Bourdieu notes that the posture or gaze inhabited by the scholastic observer must be fundamentally different from that of those who are involved in social processes. It involves a distance from the immediate intelligibility of the world, and the posture of the scholastic observer is a “disposition to regard his or her experience and practice as an object about which one talks and thinks” (Mesny 60;). There is an analogous relationship between the kind of rigorous knowledge production that takes place in academic disciplines and that which is transferred and circulated in sports. This will be discussed further in chapters 3 and in part II, which has production of knowledge in the body as its main concern.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Chapter 3 and 6 investigate the production of discipline both in the sense of training individual bodies, and as rigorous accumulation of academic knowledges.

## Culture and national narratives

As a study of culture, this investigation relies on a double usage of the word. As Stanley Aronowitz reminds us: “culture may be taken both as the civilizing process – where the assimilation of art and its traditions is understood as one of the crucial elements of self-creation – and, in the anthropological sense, as the practices (and, Bakhtin argues, utterances) that constitute everyday life” (Aronowitz 119-120). To cultivate means to engage in a practice to bring someone, perhaps even oneself, into culture. It includes an element of training, and a sense of transferral of knowledge from master to student. Bourdieu writes thoroughly on this relation, both as a matter of exercising the gaze and more generally as a body praxis. It is relevant to those who teach or learn the craft of cultural analysis or sociology, but also in the analysis of cultural practices, such as football, since they may provide a metaphorical apparatus to illustrate the educational process. In its second sense, the word culture brings together the writing of Bourdieu with our study of national narratives. While they approach cultural contingency differently, both Bourdieu’s cultural analysis and a study of national narratives rely on the word culture to signify a range of everyday practices configured differently in various spatial and socio-economic locations.

Bourdieu’s tools for cultural analysis provide a conceptual apparatus to understand the national-sports nexus as it is deployed in individual bodies. Foucault noted that the concept of the individual is itself a relatively recent invention, and probably manufactured in the late eighteenth century as a product of three instruments of dominance; hierarchical observation, normalising judgement and the examination (*Discipline and Punish* 170-189). Sports are vehicles to produce individuals through this threefold machinery: both as popular practices and in their mass mediated forms, sports allow their participants to be ranked in hierarchies, judged according to norms, and to be examined by a gaze that is exterior to the actions on the

field. The structure which defines the individual exists prior to any particular player and coordinates the struggle between participants. To put it differently, we are moulded to act in the world as individuals – we did not become individuals by our own choice – and while our notions of individual agency tend to posit a single person as an autonomous moral agent, our autonomy is circumscribed and structured by institutions and narratives such as those of the nation.

Sports may aid in understanding how our agency is circumscribed by structures beyond our control – and may itself be a structured device. Consider a player on the football field: her actions on the field are determined by the rules of the game, her team's tactical and strategic game plan, her skills – which is the product of historically sedimented training and ability – the quality of the pitch, movements of team mates and opponents, the location and movement of the ball and so forth. Analogously, a player in a social field has a space to manoeuvre that is structured and circumscribed by rules, other players, historically determined skills and abilities, and the ever-changing state of the field. Our individual freedom to act in ways that intervene in the state of the field is highly limited. In Bourdieu's field theory, the national field as an element in the field of power always contains the space for manoeuvre in the various sub-fields, such as the field of cultural production, and for individual agency.

Bourdieu tends to regard nationalism as a property of the field of power that exerts its influence on the way we perceive, think and act, establishing limits to our individual agency. Nations tell stories of belonging and solidarity. The deep horizontal comradeship offered by these social formations requires that members renounce their individual difference and pursue a sense of solidarity in the face of outsiders. There is an element of subtle persuasion involved. Nations are relatively recent social formations, but tend to portray themselves as

looming out of an immemorial past – as if they were transcendent. We may be convinced to take part in an exchange: In return for membership in a community that promises a limitless future and meaning to our lives despite our mortality, we must give up our individuality and some of our autonomy.

Nations use storytelling as a way to persuade their members to make these sacrifices. To Benedict Anderson nations came into existence by acts of the imagination (*Imagined Communities* 6). The new communities that demanded their independence from the imperial centres at the end of the eighteenth century were imagined as national, and it was previously imperial subjects in the American colonies who conjured these new communities. The particular form of the new national imaginary is not without consequence.<sup>3</sup>

While nations narrate themselves as unparalleled and particularly compelling specimens, the very structure of these stories reveal the common foundations to nations. Perhaps it is a national drive for singularity that compels nations to narrate themselves in the epic form. This genre portrays a national heroic past, a world of “beginnings” and “peak times” in the national history. Mikhail Bakhtin (p. 15) noted that the national past of the epic is clearly demarcated in time and space from our own present. This absolute separation between the world of the epic and our own makes it suitable for arguments that nations are beyond human creation and democratic constitution.

Stories of sports are closely related to epic narratives. At the very core of the national-sports nexus we find the epic as bridge and reminder of the location of sport as a subfield to the national field of power. Despite their apparent differences, nations appear to share narrative ground.

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<sup>3</sup> Chapter 4 proposes a discursive approach to nationalism modelled after Benedict Anderson’s view of nations as contingent and imagined communities. It discusses how articulation and narrative are essential to the construction of nations, and provides specific examples for the South African social formation. Chapter 5.1 offers a detailed discussion of how the South African nation was produced through narratives of football in the transmission of the 1998 Football World Cup on South African television.



## **Bourdieu and sport**

Although this is centrally a study about Bourdieu's type of cultural analysis, it is not a monograph. Bourdieu wrote two pieces that had sport as their explicit theme. "Program for a sociology of sport" was first published in 1988 and deals with sport as system of preferences structured on the basis of the degree of engagement with the body (see above and chapter 3). It also proposes a two-stage model of sports – a stage of appropriation and a stage of dissemination, or "popularisation" – as well as the idea that sports are useful in governance in that they manufacture a necessary consent from participants' bodies – a consent that might have been refused if the body was not in a state of "somatisation" engendered through sport. In this paper, Bourdieu also develops the idea of sports as raising the question of what it entails to understand "with the body", and what it means that practitioners of sports are taught to communicate in a silent, practical way. These issues are discussed further particularly in chapter 3, but also form the basis of the arguments in parts II and III of this study, which deal with embodied knowledges and mass mediated sports respectively.

The second piece, "How can one be a sports fan?", has appeared in print in various places. The version published in 1993 in Simon During's often used reader of cultural studies will form the basis of the discussion here. In "Sports fan", Bourdieu develops the idea of sport as a kind of physical art-for-art's sake developed in private schools in the nineteenth century that had the purpose of instilling a disinterested relation to one's body in those who participated. In this essay Bourdieu also gives some detail with regard to how the appropriation of sport took place and what kinds of uses sport and physical education served to the dominant fraction of the dominant class: by adopting vulgar games and filtering them through a sieve of the values characteristic of this fraction – "fair play," rôle distance, etc. –

sport became a vehicle both to train the future leaders of industry and government, as well as to disseminate the values of this fraction to the larger public in the popularisation phase, presenting such values as "natural" and "intrinsic" to sport. As such, sports are appropriate examples of the larger structure Bourdieu investigates: how precisely the values and interests of a fraction of the dominant class became a normative world view.

It is also in this essay that Bourdieu specifies the various relations to the body that emerge from different class "habitus", and how what he calls the "macrobiotic cult of health" emerged. Again, these ideas will be the topic of chapter 3, and will also be central to the argument developed around the use of what Bourdieu elsewhere calls *illusio* in order to produce a containable, governable body in chapter 7. In chapter 8, I challenge the idea Bourdieu proposes in "Sports fan" that mass mediated sports tend to render those who watch passive. Against this view I enlist the work of Stuart Hall and others who show that any decoding activity, necessary to make meaning of televised sport, involves an active engagement on the part of the viewers. This echoes the debate in chapter 2, regarding the status of mediated texts and the role a process of signification plays in the production of meaning. Bourdieu theorises what he refers to as symbolisation, but does not break with what Tony Bennett refers to as the "mirror theory" of language. As a consequence, Bourdieu's view on the process of mediation is limited by the under-theorised role of the recipient in making sense of the message.

In "Program" Bourdieu offers what he calls some "general, programmatic" guidelines for analysts of sport as cultural phenomena. These guidelines are supplemented with advice and instructions regarding methodology and the practical activity of research from his Paris and Chicago workshops, reprinted in Bourdieu and Wacquant, *Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (1992), as well as other key texts.

Monographs that focus exclusively on Bourdieu's work and have been consulted here include David Swartz, *Culture and Power* (1997), and Annick Prieur and Carsten Sestoft, *Pierre Bourdieu* (2006). Additionally there are book-length studies that focus on aspects of Bourdieu's approach, such as Richard Schusterman, *Bourdieu. A Critical Reader* (1999), and Michael Grenfell and David James, *Acts of Practical Theory – Bourdieu and Education* (1998). These works are consulted here and quoted where applicable. In addition, secondary literature is consulted in the form of journal articles, web resources, and so on, and referred to in the chapters that engage the particular aspects of Bourdieu's approach to cultural analysis.

Much of the work in this study concerns finding the appropriate tools to investigate the various elements of the national-sports nexus. In order to understand mass mediations and signification, Bourdieu's work is supplemented with insights from cultural and media studies (e.g. Bennett; Hall "Encoding/decoding", "Encoding and decoding in the television discourse") to bring out the work of the viewer in making meaning of mediated events. The discursive approach to nationalism that is the topic of chapter 4 is prepared with a set of concepts from discourse theory in chapter 3, such as articulation and subject position. By comparing discursive approaches to Bourdieu's type of cultural analysis I show the similarities and ruptures between the two modes of thought.

### **Sport and cultural capital**

One way in which Bourdieu's cultural analysis overcomes the impasse between subjectivist – those who overemphasise the role of the individual – and objectivist – or determinist – approaches is through the term *habitus*. The *habitus* invests individuals' actions with social force: our perceptions, thoughts and acts are structured by our historically sedimented elements in social fields. The *habitus* is an organising concept. It gives expression to the

totality of an agent's dispositions.

The term field makes it possible to describe how agents and groups struggle for dominance and cultural capital in socially distinct arenas. In Bourdieu's view of the social world, sports are sub-fields to the larger field of cultural production. Like other such fields, sports offer specific forms of cultural capital – or recognition – to those who engage in them. In the system of preferences with regard to sport, the determining element is “the degree of engagement of the body” (Bourdieu, “Program” 157). The most distinctive value – or cultural capital – is bestowed on those who associate with sports that euphemise violence to the highest degree, so that, in golf, distance is created “by the very logic of a confrontation which excludes all direct contact, even through a ball” (ibid. 158).

Sports tend to have a common trajectory: out of vulgar games by and for the common folk, these activities were disconnected from their religious and bodily purposes, and used as a kind of physical art-for-art's sake in British private schools to instil a relation of disinterestedness to their bodies in the “sons of the heads of private industry” (Bourdieu, “Sports fan” 344). Sports claimed their cultural autonomy by refashioning these games in accordance with the mechanisms of high modernity: rationalisation, calculability, predictability and a corpus of rules which turned common games into activities with a distinct distance from material interest. When sports return to the masses, differences in their popularity indicate their distinctive values.<sup>4</sup>

Bourdieu distinguishes between cultural practices in large and small-scale production (“Field” 38; *The Rules of Art* 124). While less popular sports, such as aikido and golf, may on occasion be made available to wider audiences, none of them have an audience on the same scale as football. Consequently, having an association with practices in the field of small-scale cultural production offers a higher distinctive value – or cultural capital – than an association

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<sup>4</sup> Chapter 3 discusses Bourdieu's cultural analysis of sport in greater detail.

with a mass-produced spectacle such as football.

Football may reward elite practitioners with considerable economic gain, embedded as the sport is within the field of economic production, but in return it offers little cultural capital. It is regarded as the world's most popular sport. The fewer who appreciate and practise a cultural form, the more cultural capital it commands. Bourdieu expressed this logic in his dictum that the logic of the cultural field is that of the economic field inverted ("Field" 29-73): the higher degree of autonomy from the economic field, the more cultural capital we associate with the practice, and the more distinctive is the kind of recognition offered to those who associate with it. The distinction between a sport in small-scale production, such as golf, in relation to a large-scale sport, like football, is a product of a threefold difference: there is a significant difference with regard to the characteristics of those who practice them; they can be distinguished by taking account of their location within the field of cultural production; and they can be delineated from each other by accounting for inherent characteristics, specifically their euphemisation of violence.<sup>5</sup>

## **Outline of study**

This study is divided into three main sections. The first considers general approaches to representation and signification, Bourdieu's cultural analysis contrasted with discourse theory, and theories of nationalism. The second section argues that there is a changing body of sport. Both in the micro technologies of governance we find in school sports and in the mass disseminations of spectacular sports events nations have hitherto sought to establish an epic body. However, a new, globalised body is emerging. This body is primarily signified as "natural" and "authentic" (as opposed to "corrupted" or "disingenuous"), and relatively autonomous of the division along national boundaries established in and through the "epic

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<sup>5</sup> See chapter 8 for a further discussion of these distinctions.

body”. The third section is more specifically concerned with spectacular sports, and how they provide illusions that may dupe, but also offer the possibility of awakening, the spectator.

Together, the study attempts to interrogate the relations between sport, media, and nations, how sports are used to inscribe nations onto the body, how nations are naturalised, turned into an automatised habit, and made part of our dispositions to perceive, think and act. Before we begin our venture into the national-sports nexus proper, it may be useful to consider some general theories on how meaning is made.

Chapter 2 interrogates two models of representation and their specific implications for the relationship between sport and society. The first model, often referred to as the mirror-theory of representation, posits that the site of representation – in our case sports – is best described as a mirror of that which is represented, i.e. society. For instance, in terms of the mass media, those who hold this view on the actual or ideal relationship between media and society, claim that the media is, or should be, as accurate a reflection as possible of society. In Plato’s ideal republic, poets would be banned, since all events would be immediately meaningful to the ruling philosophers, and such events would therefore not need representation by skilled mediators. In the mirror theory of representation, there is finally no medium: the world represents itself. The perspective is challenged by the process-oriented approach to meaning proposed by Stuart Hall. In his view, meaning is not given in the message, but is produced through interpretation, which opens the way for a range of subjective meanings – which may be structured by context and the recipient’s location in social space – produced by the same representation of a sports event.

Chapter 3 provides a toolbox to interrogate the national-sports nexus. We start from a critique of the knowing subject established through practices of self-reflexivity and objectification, and ask which tools are necessary to produce a disciplinary and disciplined

knower of cultural analysis. Discipline is a term used here to describe a form of mastery, a kind of *dressage* of the body, and knowledges that are circulated in academic fields. In all these senses, the term discipline may usefully be considered as discourse. In this chapter we investigate key terms for analysing discourses; articulation, antagonism, elements, and discursive moments. We then consider some key terms from Pierre Bourdieu's field theory of culture, such as dispositions and the habitus, symbolic capital, and *illusio*. Chapter 3.1 discusses the subject in Bourdieu in more detail and relates it to the subject of discourse theory. In chapter 3.2 the referee is considered as a case to understand how the concepts of subjectivity, performativity and role-awareness may play out in a practical setting.

Chapter 4 takes a view of nationalisms as discourses that articulate and narrate nations. It considers Benedict Anderson's approach to nationalism as founded on social antagonism, dissemination of vernacular languages, and conception of time as homogenous and empty. Anderson's model is contrasted with those of Eugene Kamenka and Peter Alter – with nationalism based on social contracts and on organic, ahistorical communities. We ask if particular sports events may complicate the smooth, homogeneous time of nationalism, and whether they may be enlisted in a production of an epic, *messianic* moment so as to establish a break with the past. In order to situate our study of the 1998 Football World Cup in section 4.1 and the chapters on the changing body of sport in part II, we then ask from what kind of political organisation and social imaginary the current South African regime emerged. Where does nationalist thinking come from and what are the elements specific to these kinds of social formations? Chapter 4.1 considers the development of South African nationalism as a discourse articulating antagonisms based on language and colour. These divisions were later resignified as national. It is with the arrival of the post-apartheid political formation that the need to establish a break with the past makes itself felt. Chapter 5.1 suggests that such a break

is attempted by establishing the 1998 Football World Cup as a messianic moment, symbolising the new regime and its novelty.

Part II of the study makes use of the concepts and methods arrived at in the first part and applies them to shifting perceptions of the sporting body. First, chapter 5 considers the ways in which social codes and values are inscribed into the bodies of those who participate in sports, and we are particularly concerned with the establishment of an epic, national body through the automatised military dispositions, the dominance of values associated with the emerging bourgeoisie, and the mass production of individuals codified as dimorphic and autonomous in sports. We ask how the order of sports produces sexual difference and dominant forms of masculinities, and how they may be subverted within the scope of spectacular sports events. Chapter 5.1 considers the signification of the 1998 Football World Cup by South African broadcaster SABC and shows the epic framing of the national body. Here we discuss the ramifications of such a framing and how it contributed to establishing a new national story, with an epic, messianic, moment. The chapter also shows how a struggle over the autonomy and meaning of football between economic and national interests, and sports organisations is inscribed into the mediation, so that the meaning is not singular or given by the event itself.

Chapter 6, the second part of the section dealing with the body of sport, shows how there is a new kind of sporting body produced both through school sports and spectacular sports event. This body is globalised rather than national, and takes the “authentic” or “natural” body as its sign. Here we discuss further how the notion of *illusio* is necessary both as a kind of seduction of participants, but also as a state from which subjects may become conscious and, in turn, emancipate themselves.

In part III the focus of analysis shifts from power lodged in the body to the production



of desire – what Bourdieu might have referred to as *social orchestration* – through spectacular sports. Chapter 7 makes use of the terms *dressage* and *illusio* to discuss how such sports events are framed in a national, epic world of fathers, firsts and bests, and put to use in regulating desire by narrating the fundamental fantasies – illusions – that hold the subject together. Spectacular sports provide allegories of the excessive body meticulously produced through an individualising training machine. Sports produce phantasms of peak moments and phallic dominance, and symbolise a conquest of youth, women and the working population. We nevertheless ask if the subject may experience a kind of subjective destitution by the loss of a fundamental fantasy from watching sports and what the effects of such an experience may be. Can viewers come to a recognition of what Bourdieu called the *illusio* of social orchestration?<sup>6</sup>

Chapter 8 provides a critique of Bourdieu's theory of mass mediated sports as producing a passive subject. Spectacular sports participate in a struggle over the legitimate definition and use of the body. In Bourdieu's view, mass mediated sports are transmitted to audiences that are alienated from the games they are watching, and reduced to passive comprehension as a consequence. However, Bourdieu's view of spectacular sports events as passifying is limited and disregards the active component of meaning making as an ongoing process. The national body that is produced through spectacular sports events is both embodied in the gaze and our dispositions to perceive, think and act, and also made meaningful through interpretation on the spectator's part. This chapter suggests that Bourdieu overlooks the way sport's silent, wordless language may be mobilised to produce meanings that are unofficial and disruptive to the dominant stream of preferred interpretations.

The conclusion interrogates the multiple meanings of football. The game may be

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<sup>6</sup> See chapter 3 for a fuller discussion of the term *illusio*. The term is also central to the remarks in the conclusion.

dominated by the national signifier, and – as the stadium provides a key site for the establishment of the ego – central in the production of the national subject. Nevertheless, the game can be characterised as a drama, as a form of rule-bound game, or as playful activity. The ritual character of the game includes an element of *illusio*: those who participate tend to believe that it is something else and more than a game. This libidinal investment is a vehicle to transform the game from something private into a collective enterprise. The silent *dressage* of sport entails the possibility of a different site for truth.

# I Cultural Theory as Martial Arts: A Toolbox for Cultural

## Analysis

In the 2001 documentary film *Sociology is a Martial Art* Bourdieu describes cultural analysis as “a martial art, a means of self-defense. Basically, you use it to defend yourself, without having the right to use it for unfair attacks” (McQuade). This section outlines the various techniques of cultural analysis as practice, with an emphasis on tools that will aid in understanding mediations of the national-sports nexus – theories of signification, discourse and nationalism –, in addition to laying out the basic concepts of Bourdieu that will be of use here. The main elements are listed in the title of the study; signification, sport and nationalism. They establish the theoretical and historical framework necessary to answer the question of what kind of body is manufactured through sports and how mediations of sports events are made meaningful to subjects.

Bourdieu himself recommended to students that they approach his style of cultural analysis as a toolbox. Teaching a *métier*, a craft, requires a different approach from “the teaching of knowledges (*savoirs*)” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 222), since the “*scientific habitus* ... reacts in the face of ‘practical choices’”. Therefore, one must apply practical logic to research as actors would in other social fields: it is a matter of making use of the appropriate tool when one encounters a specific event in a particular social context. School sports produce different events from mediated sports events, and analysis of school curricula would need different kinds of methodological considerations from those used when we approach mediated elite sports. The analytical habitus is a “*modus operandi* that functions in a practical state” (ibid., 223) and the analyst will find tools such as field theory and dispositions useful to understand the refereeing subject (chapter 3.2), while terms such as *illusio* and social

orchestration are more appropriate in the context of mediated sports events (parts II and III).

While this gives an outline of the general approach to cultural analysis recommended by Bourdieu, and followed in principle here, the specific tools we shall need are not exhausted by those we find in the writings of Bourdieu. This study is not intended as a monograph of Bourdieu: rather, in order to understand the complex character of signification and mediation, we will draw on findings in media studies to show how the significations of mediated events are more complex in meaning than the events themselves. The added layer of signification means that the event is framed in ways that are contestable, so that work done by the spectator is a necessary part of meaning production.

Knowledge is automated through sport and lodged in the body. Therefore, sports also are ways of knowing *with* the body, and this is a kind of knowledge that often remains outside spoken discourse. This form of practical knowledge and mastery is contrasted with academic and disciplinary forms of knowledge in chapter 3. Discourse theory and its understanding of subject positions is contrasted and supplemented with key elements in Bourdieu's approach, such as field theory, dispositions and the habitus. Chapter 3.1 discusses the subject in discourse theory and Bourdieu in detail. The case study in chapter 3.2 is an investigation into the official meanings and reformulations of the refereeing subject in football. It lodges Bourdieu's field theory as an approach to situate the referee literally in a space of positions on a field, and contrasts this with the view taken by analytical philosopher Bernard Suits. The point here is that while the objective distribution of positions may be similar, only Bourdieu takes account of the practical logic of practitioners, and it is through this kind of analytical apparatus that we come to understand the meaning of referees' self-perceptions as "teachers" and "judges".

The third element in this study, nationalism, is the topic of chapter 4. To Bourdieu

nationalism is primarily a justificatory, or legitimating, discourse in the hands of the dominant fractions of the dominant class. In other words, nationalist discourse serves to defend the privileges extended and reproduced through the state and “national” – nation-wide – institutions. Part of our purpose here is to understand this kind of discourse more fully. Chapter 4 compares the discursive theory proposed by Benedict Anderson with two other approaches: it shows in what ways Anderson’s view perceives nations as discourses and how we may usefully identify the tools from chapter 3 – such as articulation and antagonism – in Anderson’s analysis. Nations, in his view, are constructed – imagined – in response to particular social circumstances: they articulate a novel social body in contrast to an antagonist, which in the inauguration phase of nationalism was the dynastic empires, such as Lisboa and Madrid. Print-capitalism made it possible to disseminate this new subject position in books and newspapers, and it generated a novel sense of time. Rather than an order marked by prefiguration and fulfilment – what Walter Benjamin (“Theses on the philosophy of history” 246) refers to as Messianic time – the former colonies now experience time as “homogeneous and empty” or “cross-transverse”: while something happened in Madrid, *something else* might take place in, say, Buenos Aires. However, the case study of South Africa shows that the 1998 Football World Cup was mediated on national television as an attempt to make a new – albeit contested – national body (chapter 5.1) with a messianic break with the kind of linguistic, organic nationalism that preceded it (chapter 4.1).

The kinds of knowledge addressed in this section are thus twofold: I will present a set of concepts and theories of signification, cultural analysis and nationalism, while also giving specific examples of how these terms may come into play in specific cases – the refereeing subject and the South African national formation. What should emerge is a sense of practical logic: a *modus operandi* of cultural analysis. Parts II and III will engage in more detail

specific elements in the national-sports nexus: How and what kind of national body is produced through sports (part II) and how are spectacular sports enlisted as tools of national, social orchestration (part III)?

## **2. Signification: Mediation and sites of meaning**

This chapter is centrally concerned with two things: how messages are made and how they are interpreted by readers or viewers. With regard to the former, Bourdieu tends to hold the view that sports symbolise violence, through its various degrees of euphemisation, in the sense that the events we observe and participate in are representations of previously violent events (Bourdieu, “Program”). In this sense events in sports are signifiers of a violent signified. This structuralist model has several limits that shall be dealt with here. A discursive approach to signification may be said to rest on a post-structuralist foundation. Briefly put, the violence that sport refers to can only be grasped as a sign – the signifier points to another signifier – which again can be made meaningful with reference to other signifiers, and so on, so that there is no final referent or certain organising element *outside discourse itself* (Derrida, “Structure, sign and play”).

With regard to how messages are made to mean, studies of communication have offered a wide range of positions on the relation between social events, the mass media, and audiences. A study of how the body is made meaningful may usefully engage these debates, both in order to investigate how the mass media produces coded messages about bodies – national bodies, gendered and sexed bodies, bodies of colour, and so forth – but also to address how the body itself is used as a medium of communication. Bourdieu, while concerned with the effects of the mass media, did not engage the debate over audience interpretations directly. For instance, in his book *On Television*, he elaborated “all of the various ways in which journalism imposes limits on the public’s vision of what constitutes reality,” but offered little discussion of how audiences interact with messages to produce meaning (Bourdieu, *On Television*; Szeman). When writing on sport, Bourdieu tended to view audiences as an undifferentiated mass that are rendered increasingly passive by spectacular sport shows (1988:

159). In this respect, theories of mass communication that take a more differentiated view of audience interpretation may add complexity to Bourdieu's insights on elite sports as spectacular events.

The body plays an important role as a site for inscription in Bourdieu's theory, both as a mediator in his notion of habitus – which we may briefly define as sedimented dispositions to perceive, think and act, and particularly structured by class position – and as a vehicle to instil obedience and belief in subjects. The body, says Bourdieu, obeys: it gives a consent that the mind might have otherwise refused.<sup>7</sup> The body plays a double role: it betrays our location in the economic field and it serves as a target for economic and political power to inscribe and further their dominance.

Here we shall investigate two models of communication – the mirror theory and the encoding/decoding model – and then ask how the body should be situated in these models, and what role the body plays in producing meaning from sport. These three questions are central: First, do the media simply serve as neutral mirrors for social events, such as spectacular sports events, or are they playing a part in producing a world for audiences? Second, as sports themselves often are considered models for society, how can we conceive of this relationship as a form of representation? Third, is the difficulty with the mirror-theory in fact related to a larger issue: a dualism of 'reality' and its representations that assigns primacy and priority to the former, while ignoring that there can be no clear distinction between them since we can have no communicative knowledge of 'reality' except through some form of representation?

The debates around the mirror theory have been concerned with how messages are shaped with or without the active participation of the mass media. In order to understand how

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<sup>7</sup> The concepts of habitus, dispositions, and the production of consent with its attendant notion of a necessary *illusio* will be discussed in more detail in chapter 3.



meaning is made out of these messages we will turn to Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding model with a particular emphasis on how the same media text can produce different interpretations, although – as Hall concedes – such interpretations are structured by the audience's social position.

### **The mirror theory**

There has been a long debate over the relationship between mass media and society. Should the media be regarded a fourth estate that governs society alongside parliaments, courts and governments (Carlyle)? And is it therefore the media's responsibility that the stories they relate are told in a truthful and objective fashion? Do mass media influence the messages they convey, and are different kinds of media affecting messages differently (McLuhan)? Are the media crucial in manufacturing from the masses the consent that governments and powerful economic elites need to maintain their positions (Herman and Chomsky)?

Suffice it to say here that we may discern two main positions on the topic: either the media gives or should give a truthful and objective representation of society in order to justify and maintain its role as watchdog in the balanced governance of the modern nation state, or the media carries a weight of its own, shaping the message, for better or worse, and being influenced by governments and economic interests. This latter position holds that the media has a degree of autonomy in selecting, producing and distributing messages, and that this autonomy influences the way we make meaning of the world we live in.

These debates are relevant in at least two ways for our topic. First, sports events are regularly covered by the mass media, and whether we see the media as providing a detached and objective perspective, or as influencing messages and trying to produce specific effects in audiences, has a bearing on the way we approach media representations of sports. If the mass

media are a mirror of society – a *mise en abyme* of the larger social world – meaning would be a direct product of the sport event itself. If, on the other hand, media organisations, advertisers and governments influence the way sports are selected for representation, covered and distributed, we may find it useful to study the specific effects of mass mediation if we want to know how meaning is made out of spectacular sports.<sup>8</sup>

Second, sports were conceived in the nineteenth century as models of society. Their purpose was to serve as a training ground for the sons of the wealthy in how to behave in specific situations that they may encounter in their adult life, and to teach them the appropriate rôle distance in social interactions (Bourdieu, “Program” 154).<sup>9</sup> Today, the relation is reversed. Sports now are held up as models for society: they should provide better arenas than larger society, participants that are more honest and truthful, and practices that are more just (Møller 201-202; Tamburrini 205-206,). In both of these scenarios – whether we see society as a model for sport, or sport as a model for society – there is an act of representation involved, and it is relevant to ask how meaning is produced in this representational game. If sports are mirrors of society, we would find the meaning of a sport in the social activity it models. To Bourdieu, sports symbolised social violence to different degrees, with activities like tai-chi and golf at one end of the spectrum and boxing at the other (1988: 155). The mirror theory would suggest that the meaning of sport is simply as a euphemised violent combat between individuals or groups, and it would exclude the possibility of sport as providing a modelling activity. As Bourdieu would remind us, each sport has a relatively autonomous history, code, esoteric record, administrative bodies, and so on. As a result, sports constitute cultural fields with the ability to produce messages that are specific to their field. If

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<sup>8</sup> The second section of this study deals with specific elite sport mediations and considers how institutional aspects of the mass media influence sport representations.

<sup>9</sup> See also the discussion of the space of sports and euphemisation of violence in chapter 7. As Bourdieu shows, the emergent industrial bourgeoisie developed their sense of sports in distinction to the values of the working classes. This is how the notion of a physical art-for-art’s sake and a disinterested relation to the body emerged.

sports, their performers, administrators, sponsors, organisations and television broadcasters influence the meaning of sport events, it is relevant to ask how the mediation process affects meaning.

Our questions – do the mass media provide mirrors of sports events? and are sports mirrors of society? – are joined together in their common concern for the relation between the model, or site of representation, and that which is modelled or represented. If the media provided mirrors of sport events, we would not need to study media representations of sports to understand the meaning of a sporting event. Similarly, if sports were mirrors of the larger social world it would be redundant to study sport performances, since these would be merely mirror images of social events. Rather, we could go and study the event directly. Tony Bennett comments that the mirror theory “implies that the media are secondary and derivative, somehow less real than the ‘real’ they reflect, existing above society and passively mirroring it rather than forming an active and integral part of it” (p. 287). The analogy seems to favour a view of the media as custodians of a balanced government, or as a fourth estate, justified by its objective and impartial representation of social events. Mirrors do not intervene in what is placed before them: they are content with accurately rendering the object of representation. It is not the media that provide meanings to messages but the events themselves. In this view, the media are not really a part of the same reality they report on: they must retain a distinct detachment from the reality they represent in order to maintain their objective impartiality and mirror-like functionality.

### **Dualisms in representation**

The difficulty with the mirror theory is not limited to media representations. Ferdinand de Saussure posited a duality between the signifier and the signified, the representation and that

which is represented. The task of the signifier is to point to the appropriate signified (de Saussure 66-67). Bennett finds an implication that signifiers are subordinate or governed by the world of signifieds: “The world of signs can only reflect what is already there. Subalterned to the reality it mirrors, the world of signs is granted only a shadowy, twilight existence” (p. 287). The world of signifieds appears to be more original and prior to the signifiers. Bennett notes that we should rather investigate the materiality of the sign and the activity of signification as a process which constructs worlds, and not simply passively reflecting a pre-existing reality. Signs are themselves part of reality as much as the media are part of the reality they report on.

There is an assumption in de Saussure’s approach to representations that each actual articulation points to a deeper and more profound structure of signs. He distinguished language from speech in order to separate “the social from what is individual” (p. 13), and his interest lay in establishing the systematic properties of this deep structure. As we move from the surface structure of any actual utterance to a deeper level of language or ideas, we venture into more profound structures of thought and reality. In this sense, media representations constitute singular utterances of a deeper level of meaning, which would be the event itself.

There seems to be a precise reference to Platonic thought at work here. In Plato’s allegory of the cave, some prisoners have been chained inside a cave since birth. Behind them puppets are moved along, and the prisoners believe that the shadows cast on the cave wall by these puppets are reality itself (Plato VII 516a-c). It would be the scholar’s task to deduce from the shadows cast on the wall to a deeper level of meaning. Language in de Saussure’s model, or social events in the mirror theory, find their analogy in the puppets themselves. In Plato’s allegory, we should strive to free ourselves from the chains that tie us down, and seek beyond the cave to find absolute truth – the deepest and most profound structural level of

language or ideas.

Indeed, as noted above, in Plato's ideal republic, truth should be sought without mediation. This kind of truth could only be given by the ruler-philosophers who would have privileged insight directly into divine truth: "all poetical imitations are ruinous to the understanding of the hearers, and ... knowledge of their true nature is the only antidote to them" (Plato X). In this dualistic structure, signifiers are secondary to ideas, utterances to languages, and media representations to social events. A study of signifiers, utterances or representations should strive to find the deeper structure of ideas, languages or social events.

There are further implications for the world of sport. As sports represent society they perform the role of the secondary and the derived in this dualistic structure. If sports essentially symbolise social violence, the truth of these performances would be found in such violent acts themselves. To Plato, sports may be counted among those imitations that ruin the understanding of spectators, and would face an uncertain future in his ideal state. There is an ideal of transparency in Plato's theory: The shadows cast by the puppets should be replaced by the puppets themselves, as our knowledge of singular utterances and representations should make way for insight into languages and the deep structure of social events. The preference for transparency becomes acute when Plato seeks to banish poets and those who produce imitations from his ideal state. The whole world of representations – signifiers, utterances, and mass mediated sports – stands in the way of the kind of direct insight preferred by Plato.

### **Play of signification**

The difficulty with Plato's concept of absolute truth, or knowledge at the very deepest level of ideas or language, is that it remains as slippery as it is opaque. As we approach this centre of

knowledge, are we not searching for some point of origin that itself lies outside all structures of meaning – some point of articulation from which all other utterances would be immediately meaningful? Jacques Derrida found such a search futile or metaphysical, since such a point of origin could not itself be signified. Let us posit sport as the central signifier in a structure of meaning. To find its referent, we would look in a dictionary, and find that the noun “sport” signifies active diversion requiring physical exertion and competition, the occupation of professional athletes, someone who engages in sports, an organism that has characteristics resulting from chromosomal alteration, or verbal wit. Each of these references would point to further signifiers in the dictionary, and so forth, and we would never finally arrive at the point of origin that would illuminate the whole chain of signifiers that departed from our initial word “sport”. If we cannot find this point of origin – the locus from which all signification would be meaningful – from within signification itself, would we not be left with relying on some transcendental signified? In Derrida’s language, “everything becomes a system where the central signified, the original or transcendental signified, is never absolutely present outside a system of differences. The absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the interplay of signification ad infinitum.” (Derrida, “Structure, sign and play” 280). As we rely on language to communicate all sorts of truths, we would also have to rely on the language made by the shadows of puppets on the wall to communicate some absolute, divine truth that we might have found somewhere outside the cave, and in this language we cannot end all debate by referring to some absolute point outside language itself.

Derrida’s argument serves three purposes here: First, it illustrates the impossibility of arriving at some direct, transparent insight into truth. We are left with the use of language and representations, and in the world of mediations we can never finally arrive at some undisputed origin of truth. This is an argument along the lines of Bourdieu’s advice against objectivism in

research: “action understood as a mechanical reaction ‘without an agent’” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 121), since meaning and action is now not determined by some point outside a structure, but mediated by agents located in cultural fields that are relatively autonomous of – though still structured by – the economic field. Second, it demonstrates how the meaning of sport cannot be exhausted by referring to the social activity that it symbolises. Sport in general and each specific discipline activates a wide range of meanings in relation to wider society – such as the symbolisation of violence, warfare or courtship – in relation to each other – the kinds of technical skill or training involved – and with relation to a history of practice (Bourdieu, “Sports fan” 340-341). For instance, the meaning of a widely broadcast boxing game is not exhausted by referring to it as a symbolisation of social violence. Its relation to the economic field and to other memorable boxing matches will be crucial to structure our understanding of the event. The meaning of sport cannot be arrived at by simply pointing to some event outside its own structure, since sport constitutes a language of its own, with a capacity to produce messages that are relatively autonomous of the larger social world. In order to make meaning of sport, we need to approach its totality of practices through which each specific sport receives its value in relation to other sports, such as the degree of engagement of the body.<sup>10</sup> Boxing and tai-chi are valued differently and confer different meaning on their practitioners partly because of the different degrees of engagement with other participants’ bodies (Bourdieu, “Program” 154).<sup>11</sup>

Third, Derrida’s argument reminds us that media representations of sport will always do more than merely mirror events. Acts of mediation are themselves signifying practices that extend the domain of meaning: A football game that is televised offers a further domain of meaning compared with one that is only available to those present in the stadium. By inserting

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<sup>10</sup> In chapter 7 the relation between social class and the distinctive values of sport is discussed in greater detail.

<sup>11</sup> Chapter 3 will discuss Bourdieu’s approach to sport as a cultural field of practice in more detail.

the game into new contexts, media representations produce a whole new level of meaning and a new way of relating to the game. Observing a game on television with family members constitutes a different experience from attending a game at a stadium with friends, and the meaning that is conferred on the event is different. Watching sports is an important intergenerational experience where fathers teach sons about values such as courage, loyalty and team-spirit (Sabo and Jansen 202-204).<sup>12</sup> It is for these reasons that Tony Bennett observes a shift in studies of communication towards a focus on “the independent materiality of the signifier – the ‘fleshiness’ of the sign – but also [on] the activity and effectivity of signification as a process which actively constructs cognitive worlds rather than simply passively reflecting a pre-existing reality” (p. 287). Media institutions are part of the world they report on. They shape the messages that they deliver to audiences, and they are participating in constructing a reality for their public.

### **The encoding/decoding-model**

So far our main concern has been to determine how media messages are put together. Are they reflections of events that take place in the ‘real’ world or are the media instrumental in shaping messages and manufacturing worlds for us?

While Bourdieu only gave fragmented analyses of large-scale media production (Hesmondhalgh), his notion of cultural autonomy grants media producers a degree of independence in relation to economic and political interests. This entails that media work is not pre-determined by the outside world, but that the media participate in shaping messages. In his writing on sport, Bourdieu tended to take the view that audiences constitute a large, undifferentiated mass that are increasingly passified by the sports entertainment industry

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<sup>12</sup> Chapter 5.1 and 8 analyse two specific instances of mass mediated sport – the 1998 Football World Cup and the 2008 Uefa Champions League – with particular attention to the kinds of messages attached to the game in these instances of mass mediation.



(1988: 162).<sup>13</sup> Thus, even though he would grant the media industry a degree of autonomy in shaping messages, there is still an open question to what extent meanings can be coded into messages and whether audiences automatically accept them or if there is space to negotiate meanings. Since Bourdieu did not directly comment on this issue, we will make use of Stuart Hall's model for mass communication to see how it may enrich Bourdieu's understanding of mass mediated sport.

In his encoding/decoding-model, Stuart Hall established a two-sided exchange in mass communication ("Encoding and decoding in the television discourse" 130). This model illustrates how media institutions and audiences may construct different meanings from messages. At the moment of encoding, media institutions embed a preferred meaning into the message by drawing on social codes that are shared by the producer and audiences. When viewers or readers receive these messages, they decode them by applying codes they deem fit. Hall uses the genre of the TV Western as an example. Since producers and audiences have shared expectations of this genre, such programmes are easily recognisable. However, such shared models are not always the case in mass communication. "The codes of encoding and decoding may not be perfectly symmetrical", and "what is called 'distortion' or 'misunderstandings' arise precisely from the lack of equivalence between the two sides in the communicative exchange" ("Encoding and decoding in the television discourse" 129-130). Hall's model grants the reader or viewer a significant role. A particular decoded meaning is not an inevitable consequence of an intended meaning, and decodings do not follow inevitably from encodings. For instance, images from the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin may have been intended to demonstrate to the world the superiority of the system of government and racial ideology of Germany at that time. However, with black sprinter Jesse Owens winning four gold medals, the meaning of these images became quite different: It put the

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<sup>13</sup> Chapter 8 gives a more critical analysis of Bourdieu's approach to mass mediated events.

racial ideas of the governing Nazi party to shame and constituted a moment of a marginalised minority defeating a supposedly superior adversary – a David conquering a Goliath. In this case, the codes at the point of programming and at the moment of reception may have been distinctly different, producing opposing interpretations of the same images.

In Hall's model, meaning remains open in the sense that it is not determined either by the sender of the message or by some other instance or structure, and this is the reason why it is possible to produce different meanings for the same message. Hall stresses that "there remains *a dominant cultural order*, though it is neither univocal nor uncontested", and "different areas of social life [are] mapped into [...] domains of *dominant or preferred meanings*" ("Encoding and decoding in the television discourse" 138). Some areas require less work to "command as legitimate a *de-coding* of the event within the dominant definition" (ibid.). For example, cases where there has been a clear-cut foul committed against the rules of a sport are easier to promote as candidates for enforcing the law of the game than are more diffuse cases, where team-loyalties, national sentiments, and personal preferences can be rallied to the support of either position. In cases of clear-cut fouls, it takes less work to promote the idea that the game itself is at stake, and this challenge to the very definition of the game becomes the dominant meaning of the event. Thus, if the game itself is perceived as being threatened – such as when spectators storm the pitch – it is easier to enforce a dominant cultural order and to reach agreement on the appropriate response to the event. However, when Maradona used his hand to score in the quarter-finals in the 1986 World Cup against England – a game that Argentina went on to win 2-1 four years after the two countries had fought the Falkland/Malvinas war – and the referee awarded the goal, it was easier for Argentinians and others to overlook the foul and celebrate the victory. In this case, national sentiments and an international admiration for the outstanding football skills of Maradona

made it possible to decode televised images of the event as an act of artistry rather than as a threat to the code of the game.

Our three cases – Jesse Owens winning four gold medals in 1936, Maradona scoring with his hand in 1986, and spectators storming the pitch – show that there is room for different interpretations of the same images depending on the code used by producers and

Image	Encoding	Decoding
Jesse Owens winning four gold medals in 1936	Demonstrate superiority of then-German system and ideology	Conquest of racist ideology
Spectators storming the pitch	Threat to dominant order, law should be enforced	Threat to dominant order, law should be enforced
Maradona scoring with his hand in 1986	Unclear, dependent on broadcaster	Dependent on audiences' sentiments

*Fig. 1: Applications of the encoding-decoding model*

audiences. In Hall's words, "things and events in the real world do not contain or propose their own, integral, single and intrinsic meaning, which is then merely transferred through language. Meaning is a social production, a practice. The world has to be *made to mean*" (Hall, "The rediscovery of 'ideology'" 67). It is not always the case that televised images produce the expected meaning to audiences. When Jesse Owens won his four gold medals, interpretations were most likely quite the opposite of what the German television producers had expected, and in the case of Maradona scoring with his hand, audience interpretations would differ depending national and personal affiliations. Only in the second of our three examples would the dominant meaning be regularly produced in audiences. "In order for one meaning to be regularly produced, it had to win a kind of credibility, legitimacy, or taken-for-grantedness for itself" (ibid.). This kind of naturalisation of meaning is only the case in the second of our three examples.

The decoder plays an important role in producing meaning from images and texts in this model. Yet there are limits to the variety of interpretations any given message can

produce. Hall suggests three main positions which readers take to mass mediated messages: the dominant code is produced by viewers who “takes the connoted meaning from, say, a television newscast or current affairs programme, full and straight, and decodes the message in terms of the reference-code” (“Encoding and decoding in the television discourse” 140). In this case, the code appears natural and transparent, and there is no miscommunication or noise on the line between the media institution and the audience. In contradistinction to the dominant position we find viewers who make use of an oppositional code. In these cases, the viewer perfectly understands the inflection given to an event, but “determine[s] to decode the message in a globally contrary way” (ibid. 142), such as when we watch a political commercial for a party we vote against. In between these positions, we find viewers who employ a negotiated decoding of a message. They accept “hegemonic definitions to make the grand significations, while, at a more restricted, situational level, makes its own ... ‘exceptions’ to the rule” (ibid. 141). Hall’s scheme is useful to illustrate the possibility of a variety of interpretations to any given message, while acknowledging that there is a structural predisposition for interpretations that agree with the dominant code.

### **The body as a site of communication**

Finally, the body is itself a medium of communication. Bourdieu notes that sports and physical education shape the body in ways that go beyond our awareness when we train or practise sports. They produce relationships between performer and tutor that are based on obedience, and they manufacture a necessary consent from our body that we might have refused had we not been so engaged in practising the sport (Bourdieu, “Program” 161). Sports and physical education shape our dispositions to perceive, think and act, and they do so outside our conscious awareness. It is in this sense that the body provides a site for inscription

by sports. Again, if the body is merely a mirror of a larger society that writes on them, meaning would be directly inscribed, and would not need interpretation. If, on the other hand, bodies mediate a range of interests, such as national texts, economic interest, and conceptions of gendered behaviour, each body may negotiate these interests differently, and each perspective on the body may interpret the result of these negotiations in a different way.

When Bourdieu introduces the model, he contextualises it as a matter of negotiating between objectivist and subjectivist positions in cultural analysis. An analogy will be useful: at its most immediate level, the mirror theory of communication poses a direct transfer of messages and attendant meaning from a social event to an audience. The medium of communication is transparent – practically non-existent – in the production of knowledge. This theory proposes a determinate relation between the event and meaning: each event offers a meaning that the media simply mirrors so that audiences can receive them. Such a theory would be objectivist in Bourdieu's view.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, a decoding-model that would allow for individual interpretations that were unstructured by the event, the medium and the interpreters' larger social context would constitute a case of subjectivism to Bourdieu. To mediate between these positions, Bourdieu suggests that we incorporate "the truth of practical experience" (*Outline of a Theory of Practice* 4). These questions will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

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<sup>14</sup> See also the discussion of objectivism in chapter 3.1.

### **3. Bourdieu, discourse, sport: Concepts and methods**

Bourdieu deems existentialism and phenomenology as subjectivist, while structuralism and economic determinism are considered objectivist (Swartz 54-55). These two camps do not occupy an equal plane in his type of cultural analysis. As I will show in chapter 3.1, the subject in Bourdieu is first construed in opposition to subjectivism, which is to say that Bourdieu sets out with a subject that is rigorously structured by the cultural field within which it operates, the field of power, and, ultimately, the field of class relations. What distinguishes Bourdieu from structuralists, however, is his insistence on the relative autonomy of cultural practices. Therefore, the objective understanding of an actor should be supplemented with an understanding of the actor's practical sense of operating in the field. Chapter 3.2 develops an argument for accounting for referees' self-perception when approaching football as a relatively autonomous field of practice.

To return to the remarks concerning cultural analysis as a form of martial arts in the opening of this section, Bruce Lee – actor, accomplished sports performer, and founder of the sport Jeet-Kune-Do – echoes Bourdieu's sentiments regarding reflexivity. To Lee mastery of an art requires practice, and cultural analysis is a form of practice (see below). This double meaning of practice – as an exercise we engage in with the purpose of improving our skills, or as an ongoing activity – also signifies the two forms of knowledge that are produced through sports: knowledge located *in* the body after a period of exercise, and knowledge *of* the body. While the former is a product of automatisisation and to a large extent entails an embodiment of belief exercised silently, the latter refers primarily to the kinds of academic knowledges manufactured through scholarly practice. What Bourdieu proposes is a practical approach to cultural analysis: the scholar can be compared to the brick-layer who makes use of the tool that is most useful, according to experience and context.

I will then interrogate three senses of the term discipline in order to locate it as a component in production of discourse, such as sports or nationalist discourses. Nations, then, articulate subject positions that emerged as a response to feudal imperialism in the colonies, according to Benedict Anderson (*Imagined Communities*; “Western nationalism and Eastern nationalism”). Chapter 4 will discuss nationalism in detail.

The tools from Bourdieu’s work that will be discussed here are fields, dispositions, habitus, symbolic capital, naturalisation, *dressage* and *illusio*.<sup>15</sup> I will then compare the subject in discourse theory with Bourdieu’s subject in greater detail. Chapter 3.2 investigates the referee from the perspective of analytical philosophy in contrast with an approach based on the practical sense Bourdieu recommends.

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From the outset, this study seeks to investigate the entirety of a social space, or what we may conceive of as football as a “total social fact” (Wacquant 27). Central to this kind of pursuit is the status of the researcher, and the relation between the knowing subject and the material or objects of research. Conducting such an investigation of a reflexive nature entails a study of the researcher’s own status, or what we may call self-reflexivity. To Bourdieu, “reflexive practice entails questioning the privileged status of a knowing ‘subject’ who is excluded from the work of objectification” (*Meditasjoner* 124).

What is at stake, then, is to involve the knowing subject in the investigation, so that we may objectify our own positions as “knowers”. In his *Méditations Pascaliennes*, Bourdieu explains that his advocacy of critical reflexivity was based on his experience that the most severe mistakes and illusions among ethnographers, historians and cultural analysts was a product of the social conditions, or the structure and operative mode, of these fields

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<sup>15</sup> This adds to the comments on the relative autonomy of culture and the brief history of sports drawn from Bourdieu in the introduction.

themselves, and particularly the promotion of a fully “conscious, rational and absolute individual (or ‘subject’)” produced by the discourse on the “human being” (Bourdieu, *Meditasjoner* 123).<sup>16</sup> The kind of historical or cultural research under critique posits a moral, or knowing, agent “as an autonomous sovereign subject” (Schildrick 152), detached from, and prior to, the social fields and conditions in which she or he is conducting research. The agency of the modernist knowing subject, then, “precedes and acts on particular contexts, rather than emerging from and being immersed in them” (ibid. 150). In order to resist this kind of atomistic perception of the scholarly producer, Bourdieu suggests closely observing the conditions of possibility of a knowing subject, and the social relations in which the cultural analyst is immersed. The points of view of cultural producers, including those of cultural analysts, historians and ethnographers, “always owe something to their situation in a field where all define themselves in part in relational terms” (Wacquant 39).

### **The practice of knowing**

To practice self-reflexivity entails both considering the status of the self, or the subject, as well as reflecting on the relations between the subject as cultural analyst, historian, or ethnographer, the objects, concepts and strategies under consideration, and the academic field in which the researcher is engaged. As Bourdieu explains, “The matrimonial practices that I had studied in a much more distant social environment, namely Kabyle society, was a way of giving me the opportunity to objectify the act of objectification and the objectifying subject” (Bourdieu, “Logic” 59). Objectification may subsequently be considered as a method of depersonalising<sup>17</sup> the objects that are manipulated in a study of culture as well as the researchers’ subjectivity and position in a social field. Provisionally assessing the sport

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<sup>16</sup> My translation.

<sup>17</sup> Analogously, Victor Shklovsky (p. 16) uses the term “defamiliarisation” (*ostraneniye*, from *stranno*, Russ. “strange”) to describe the narratological tool of making things strange.



analyst within the field of academic knowledge, Bourdieu notes that, while social scientists may be regarded as positioned near the dominated pole of the field of power, cultural analysts of sports are “doubly dominated”, since they are located near the dominated pole “both in the universe of sociologists and in the universe of sports” (Bourdieu, “Program” 153). While those who practise this kind of research are influenced by forces of attraction and repulsion that bear on all symbolic producers, the sociology of sports tends to be “scorned by sociologists, [and] despised by sportspersons” (ibid.).

While it may be possible to distinguish an ontology in Bourdieu’s “total” and “unified” social science, the implicit approach to the object of study requires a far more practical and strategic mindset in order to conduct scientific research than is often assumed. For instance, while still-dominant notions of divisions of labour between academic practitioners prescribe that a select few of those within the academic field should primarily supply ontological and epistemological frames – what is often referred to as “theory” – while the majority of regular academic workers rather should concern themselves with the application of these theories – engaging in “practice” – and, hence, re-enacting the dominant mode of consecration of academic labour, Bourdieu recommends an approach to social science where practitioners may apply a number of tools, concepts and strategies. This logic of the social division of labour is doubly reproduced in the cultural analysis of sport, since there are “those who know sport very well on a practical level but do not know how to talk about it and, on the other hand, those who know sport very poorly on a practical level and who could talk about it, but disdain doing so” (“Program” 153). Rather than postulating any particular theoretical mode or axiomatic sets of knowledge, Bourdieu proposes to perceive the production of social science as a way of manufacturing and disseminating knowledge, embedded in sometimes competing, sometimes relatively peacefully coexisting, modes of

economic and symbolic production. In place of theoreticism, which may be considered as a self-enclosed, self-referential realm of discourse, cultural analysts should be guided by a practical disposition and practitioners should approach theories and methodologies as “tool kits” designed to “help [the analyst] solve problems”. In short, such a framework to establish “total social facts” remains “for the most part empty” and consists above all of “warnings and programmatic guidelines” (ibid. 160).

Practical logic is productive of actual research, and since “habitus is in cahoots with the fuzzy and the vague [...], the logic of practice is logical up to the point where the logical would cease to be practical” (Wacquant 22-23). Rather than positing a set of normative rules, or first principles, for research, Bourdieu suggests considering methods of research more as a set of tools which may be employed. The practice of reflexive analysis, then, stands in an analogous relation to that of the *bricoleur*, or brick-layer, who builds brick by brick, using the means at hand, as opposed to the engineer, who “constructs the totality of his own syntax” (Derrida, “Structure, sign and play”). *Bricolage* is also a mythopoetic, or discursive, activity, indicating that cultural analysis must remain uncentred, or without first principles. In other words, meaning is not to be located in the centre, i.e., the subject or author. Instead, the listeners or readers participate in the production of meaning in this kind of approach. Furthermore, since there is no final identity to be located in the subject, the researcher subject can never be fully present in the research situation. The relations of discourse are not those we traditionally have expected to find between subjects and objects, but relations of “mutual complicity [...] or possession” (Wacquant 20).

Questions such as “how do we know what we know?” and “what do we, in fact, know?” are component parts of what we refer to as epistemology. It is both a matter of ascertaining knowledges (objects, knowers, methods of validation, and so forth), and of

organising knowledges, in terms of time, space, causality, or some other structure, as it may be.<sup>18</sup> Reflexive analysis interrogates some key assumptions of the dominant approach to social inquiry, or what Bourdieu refers to as “objectivism” (Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*), or empiricism, such as how we measure objective truth, and whether such a concept is valid. Empiricism posits a clear distinction between theory – or epistemological and ontological frames – and data, which should be derived from experiment and observation, rather than theory. As Bourdieu has shown, a clear distinction between researcher subject, method, and objects of observation, cannot be upheld. In Michel Foucault’s terminology, the term *episteme* (Gr. “knowledge”) may be used to “designate the set of conceptual procedures which govern the production of knowledge” (Clark), and considered as part of a discursive ensemble, along with the notion of discipline.

## Discipline

We may discern three senses of the term discipline.<sup>19</sup> First, in his *Jeet Kune Do*, Bruce Lee makes use of the term to signify a pathway to self-mastery:

True mastery transcends any particular art. It stems from mastery of oneself – the ability, developed through self-discipline, to be calm, fully aware, and completely in tune with oneself and the surroundings. Then, and only then, can a person know himself. (p. 4)

Mastery of oneself – or the ability to be calm, agile, and in tune with the social setting of one’s actions – is a precondition to self-knowledge. Discipline is acquired through practice, and empowers the practitioner to consider her or his impulse, so that she or he will avoid

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<sup>18</sup> Epistemology may be defined as referring to theories of knowledge, particularly with regards to methods and validation.

<sup>19</sup> The question of training the disciplinary gaze is discussed in the introduction. Chapter 8 considers the production of a Kantian distance to the object through sports.

acting on fear or unreasonable motivations. One does not gain discipline, or self-mastery, through “prolonged imitative drilling,” even if such an approach would promote mechanical precision to the performer, since “the margin of freedom of expression grows narrower and narrower,” and, in the long run, the practitioner would be “moulded according to someone else’s fancy” (ibid. 7-8). To Lee, *episteme*, or knowledge, “simply means self-knowledge”, or to be aware of oneself (ibid. 8). Lee does not acknowledge any particular method or style to martial arts. Lee’s approach to mastery is based on practical adaptation to “ever-changing situations” (ibid. 4), or the “constant movement, un-rhythmic movement, as well as constant change” of life (ibid. 11). Finding the right approach or technique, then, is a matter of exercise, and the correct response, or methodology, is not given before the situation occurs, but should rather be conceived of in relational terms. Lee advises us to consider the relationship between the master and the student. While the teacher should occupy the rôle of the guide, or “pointer of truth, but not a giver of truth”, learners must be sincere, serious, and be concerned with “independent inquiry”. The “depending mind ... has not come to understand himself. In other words, he has gained control of the manipulative skill he has[,] but not what he is in himself” (ibid. 10), which can only be acquired through discipline and self-mastery.

Second, discipline may be understood as a controlled submission of the body, forcing upon it docility and utility. In *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault stipulates that it is discipline that “‘makes’ individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise” (p. 170). Discipline, then, is something that must be maintained or kept, as when there is an expression of a desire to maintain discipline in the classroom, or to keep bodies in check. This “policy of coercions that act upon the body” (ibid. 138) was constituted during the late eighteenth century through a

number of “simple instruments; hierarchical observation, normalizing judgement and their combination in a procedure that is specific to it, the examination” (ibid. 170), and, in turn, was productive of what we today refer to as “individuals”. Discipline consisted of a “meticulous control of the operations of the body, which assured the constant subjection of its forces and imposed upon them a relation of docility-utility, might be called ‘disciplines’” (ibid. 137). This notion of discipline entails that submission is forced upon the body from the outside, as a kind of *dressage* of the human body.

Finally, we may define discipline as a “system of control in the production of discourse” (Foucault, “Discourse on language” 224). As such, we may also perceive discipline as one of a set of tools to operate, or manage, institutionalised knowledge, and, on a larger scale, as filters to that which may be uttered or enunciated within a theoretical or academic field. In a discussion of the discipline of economics, Amariglio, Resnick and Wolff point out that “a discipline arises in the course of struggles to limit discourses involved in the production of formal knowledge” (p. 150). Disciplines consist of practitioners, objects of knowledge, methods, a set of propositions considered to be true, resources, and institutions located in social contexts.

Attention to discipline is not merely a concern about institutions and professionalization; it is above all about bodies – human bodies. Disciplines are institutionalized formations for organizing schemes of perception, appreciation, and action, and for inculcating them as tools of cognition and communication. At the same time, as embodied practical operators, disciplines are political structures that mediate crucially between the political economy and the production of knowledge. (Lenoir 72)

A discipline in this perspective is not the sum total of truths that is contained, utterable, or acceptable within a certain academic field, since disciplines consist of errors as well as truths. What counts as true statements are not given beforehand, but are products of the

institutionalised context of formal knowledge, or, in other words, procedures for perceptions, cognitions, validations, and so forth. In Lenoir's view, these schemes of appreciation and tools of cognition are embodied, or become part of disciplinary practitioners' dispositions, as habituated or corporeal knowledge.

### **Discourse and articulation**

To Laclau and Mouffe, discourses are structured totalities resulting from articulatory practice. For instance, when two bricklayers cooperate in building a wall, both the verbal communication that take place between the bricklayers and the manual movements, such as the handing over of bricks, putting bricks on top of and next to each other, and so on, form part of the totality of the discourse of "building a wall". Hence, discourses consist of both linguistic and extralinguistic practices in regularised and rule-bound, or structured, systems of dispersion.<sup>20</sup> Linguistic and extralinguistic moments "constitute a differential and structured system of positions – that is, a discourse. The differential positions include, therefore a dispersion of very diverse material elements." (*Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* 108). These discursive formations are produced by and productive of subjects, objects, concepts, and strategies. Discursive formations can be seen as ensembles of differential positions, or moments, within a structured totality. Differences, which are not discursively articulated, are signified as elements, and when they are articulated in a certain discourse, their meaning is considered as moments within that discourse. Consequently, a rock may become a statue, book rest, missile, or talisman, depending on the discourse in which it is embedded. In Laclau

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<sup>20</sup> Laclau and Mouffe comment: "A dispersion governed by rules may be seen from two symmetrical opposed perspectives. In the first place, as *dispersion*: this requires determination of the point of reference to which the elements can be thought of as dispersed. (In Foucault's case, one can evidently speak of dispersion only by reference to the type of absent unity constituted around the common object, the style, the concepts and the theme.) But the discursive formation can also be seen from the perspective of the *regularity* in dispersion, and be thought, in that sense as an ensemble of differential positions." (*Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 106)

and Mouffe's approach to discourse, "[e]very object is constituted as an object of discourse, insofar as no object is given outside every discursive condition of emergence" (*Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* 107), which entails that they also reject the distinction between discursive and non-discursive practices.

Articulation may also refer to the practice of joining things together so as to facilitate motion, or producing connections, that is to say, a practical activity. Laclau and Mouffe define articulation as "any practice establishing a relation among *elements* such that their identity is modified as a result of articulatory practice" (*Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* 105).<sup>21</sup>

If I kick a spherical object in the street or if I kick a ball in a football match, the *physical* fact is the same, but its *meaning* is different. The object is a football only to the extent that it establishes a system of relations with other objects, and these relations are not given by the mere referential materiality of the objects, but are, rather, socially constructed. This systematic set of relations is what we call discourse. (Laclau and Mouffe, "Post-marxism" 82)

The spherical object, then, remains an element until it is articulated, producing it as a football only to the extent that it is joined with other significations of a sport event, such as the context of a stadium. Analogously, a rock "exists independently of any system of social relations, but it is, for instance, either a projectile or an object of aesthetic contemplation only within a specific discursive configuration" (*ibid.*), in other words, the "meaning of a word is entirely context-dependent" (*ibid.* 83). In Laclau and Mouffe, it is the transformation of elements into discursive *moments* that are referred to as a process of articulation, and such transformations take the form of attempts to fix signification.<sup>22</sup>

In Laclau and Mouffe's approach to articulation, it is the realm of elements, or the domain of non-articulated differences, which establishes the perimeter of that which is

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<sup>21</sup> My emphasis.

<sup>22</sup> Simon Critchley explains that Laclau and Mouffe (following Gramsci) approach politics as a realm of decision, or hegemonisation – "actions that attempt to fix the meaning of social relations".

knowable, and against which meaning is possible. It is out of this domain that meaning is constituted through the practice of articulation, and, since we do not have access to the realm of elements themselves, the substantive reality of this domain cannot be known, even though it is experienced. Since discourses are constituted without a centre or origin,<sup>23</sup> the category of the subject is deferred and relegated to a moment in a system of dispersed subject positions. However, it is possible to perceive the kind of endless deference of signification, and of the limit of the social, through the experience of antagonism. This kind of experience, such as when “a peasant *cannot be* a peasant” – productive of an antagonism with the landowner expelling him from his land – demonstrates the impossibility of a full presence, or closure, of society. “Strictly speaking, antagonisms are not internal but external to society; or rather, they constitute the limits of society, the latter’s impossibility of fully constituting itself” (Laclou and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* 125), and as a kind of subversion of the social from within.

If full presence of society entails that each position is fixed as an “irreplaceable moment”, a subversion of the social space entails that “the specificity of each position should be dissolved” (ibid. 127), or, in other words, a fixed signifier is returned to the domain of elements. When a whole set of signifiers all come to express something identical, through a chain of equivalence, each of these signifiers loses its status as a differential moment and “acquires the floating character of an element” (ibid.). For instance, in a situation where a number of different signifiers, such as dress, language, skin colour or customs, all express the notion of “coloniser”, each differential moment cancels the other out, and they all come to indicate the presence of a dominant power, or “the oppressor” in relation to “the colonised”.

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<sup>23</sup> In “Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences”, Jacques Derrida defines discourse as “a system in which the central signified, the original or transcendental signified, is never absolutely present outside a system of differences. The absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely” (p. 280).



In the extreme, the logic of equivalence refers to situations where society divides into two diametrically opposite camps, e.g. when millenarian movements constitute “peasant culture [as] representing the identity of the movement, and urban culture [as] incarnating evil” (ibid. 129). An alternative to a logic of equivalence is offered by a logic of difference, characterised by situations in which articulatory practices are dispersed and frontiers transformed “into something essentially ambiguous and unstable, subject to constant displacements” (ibid. 134).

Any attempt to fix signification must always be hegemonic and non-sutured in character, since there will always remain further possibilities of articulation. The domain of elements has analogies with Anaximander’s concept of *apeiron* (Gr. “that which has no boundaries”), similarly “immortal and indestructible”, constituting some kind of mass that “surrounds and directs all” (Fairbanks). As Aristotle comments, there “is no beginning of the infinite, for in that case it would have an end. But it is without beginning and indestructible, as being a sort of first principle.”<sup>24</sup> It may be that it is a concept similar to the *apeiron*, or a kind of grey, infinite fog, that Lee refers to when he refrains from defining *Jeet Kune Do* as a style:

Maybe it is being neutral or maybe it is indifference [to style]. However, this is not the case either, for JKD is both at once “this” and “not this,” and JKD is neither opposed to styles nor not opposed to them. To understand fully, one must transcend the duality of “for” and “against” into one organic whole. Within the Absolute there is simply no distinction; everything IS. (p. 9)

In Lee’s approach, martial arts comes across as a practice of articulating the absolute, or as attempts to fix elements, i.e., floating signifiers, into moments of a martial arts discourse. Implicated by these notions of articulations as practice is the sense that there can be no finality, or suture, to discourse, since articulation is hegemonic and conjectural, and, hence,

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<sup>24</sup> The passage is from Aristotle’s *Physics* iii.4; 203 b7, quoted in Fairbanks.

ideological, since any element could always be articulated otherwise.<sup>25</sup>

The denomination of a prediscursive or non-discursive reality becomes acute when we consider the possibility of ideological critique. If it is the case that the world is constituted as sets of symbolic or ideological fictions with no fixed or non-ideological point outside these discourses, then there can be no neutral or non-discursive position from which ideology itself may be critiqued. If Anaximander's *apeiron*, Laclau and Mouffe's domain of elements, or Lee's Absolute, are themselves not ideologically constituted, these entities would enable the kind of position that may be necessary for such a critique, even if a border, or limit, to ideology cannot be finally determined, or fixed, since such a fixity would itself constitute an ideological moment.<sup>26</sup> Perhaps we may construct Walter Benjamin's thought-image of the angel facing the past, propelled backwards by a storm blowing from Paradise, as a theoretical or hypothetical possibility of such a position outside or beyond ideology, even though he acknowledges mankind's redemption as a necessary condition for the past to be "citable in all its moments" ("Theses on the philosophy of history" 246).<sup>27</sup> Paradise, in this allegory, may serve to illustrate the impossible, and yet perhaps necessary, location from which a critique of the concept of ideology may be lodged.

## Subject positions

It may be that it is nationalism's concept of distinct and non-overlapping domains that renders it useless to a martial artist (Lee 5). The meaning of sport as practice is a matter of discursive articulation, and not an *a priori* given. As a case in point, we may consider the practice of an aspiring football player participating in the South African national team in an international

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<sup>25</sup> Analogously, V.S. Volosinov notes that all signs have a political character: "The reality of the sign is wholly a matter determined by [conditions and forms of social] communication. After all, the existence of the sign is nothing but materialization of that communication" (p. 13).

<sup>26</sup> This problematic is brought up in Slavoj Žižek's "The Spectre of Ideology" (p. 70).

<sup>27</sup> For a further discussion of Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History", see chapter 4.

tournament for the first time. The totality in which he participates may be construed as that of attempting to win the game in cooperation with his teammates, or to win on behalf of some larger community (including the coach, support apparatus, administrators, or even a national community). However, it may also be the case that the totality in which his participation in the game should properly be understood is that of furthering his career. For many players outside the metropolises of football, participation in international tournaments may be one of few opportunities to demonstrate their skills and aspirations to agents from more affluent employers. In some instances, players have at a later point chosen not to participate in the national squad, since they perceive their obligations to their club team as more important in the long term than playing international games for their home country.<sup>28</sup> The specific meaning of the player's participation is contestable, and the discourse within which we articulate the player's practice as a moment is a hegemonic decision.<sup>29</sup>

As a discursive approach to practice disassembles the subject as a nomothetic entity, it introduces the possibility of a dispersal of shifting subject positions. A football player may occupy a number of positions in different discourses, which does not exclude the possibility of articulating the practitioner as a moment in nationalist discourse. However, instances where a practitioner is barred from practising her or his trade, such as is the case when nationalist discourses forbid the inclusion of certain signifiers – e.g. the barring of non-white players from the national squad during apartheid South Africa – may be productive of an experience of the 'real', or the limit of the social. The impossibility of a subject position constituted by combining the signifiers "black" and "South African" was productive of antagonisms which culminated in the democratic elections of 1994,<sup>30</sup> and later manufactured a national squad

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<sup>28</sup> Examples abound, but see, e.g., Benedict McCarthy in the case of South Africa, and John Carew in the case of Norway.

<sup>29</sup> Timothy Brennan perceives the nation as a discursive formation, since it is "not simply an allegory or imaginative vision, but a gestative political structure" (pp. 46-47).

<sup>30</sup> Other signifiers, articulated in terms of, e.g., sex or class, were, of course, also included in the chain of equivalence. The socio-political situation in South Africa in the late 1980s is discussed in further detail in chapter

consisting of “South African” players regardless of skin colour.

Discourses, or in the terminology of Bourdieu, fields of practice, such as football and nationalism, may articulate events in conflicting ways. These articulations are relatively autonomous, in the sense that each discourse, or field, has its own logic of signification. In Lee’s perspective on martial arts, it is the practitioners who should occupy the primary position in a logic of practice, whereas nationalist discourse may attempt to hegemonise, or fix, the meaning or signification of events in order to subordinate the performer to the nation.

### **Fields, dispositions and the habitus**

Bourdieu uses the term *champ*, or field, in two distinct senses.<sup>31</sup> It may refer to a “global social space”, determined by actors’ position in the statistical distribution according to the two principles of differentiation; economic capital and cultural capital. This global social space is constituted as a set of addresses, physical or virtual, in the case of the “jet-set” or cyber-communities. In addition, Bourdieu makes use of *champ* to refer to “relatively autonomous and [...] highly differentiated social worlds within global social space” (Earle 178).

Bourdieu’s field theory makes the assumption that

any social formation is structured by way of a hierarchically organized series of fields (the economic field, the educational field, the political field, the cultural field, etc.), each defined as a structured space with its own laws of functioning and its own relations of force. [...] Each field is relatively autonomous but structurally homologous with the others. (Johnson 6)

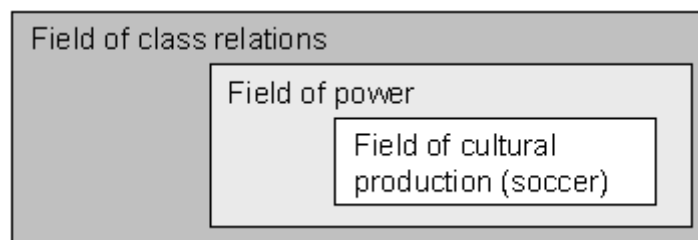
Fields are relatively determined by other fields, and the larger fields of power and class relations, or “the economy”, and are productive of dispositions, and constitutive of available positions. A new entrant to a field must take up one of the positions that are already available,

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4.1.

<sup>31</sup> See also remarks on Bourdieu's notion of social fields and forms of capital in the introduction.

and her or his dispositions must fit with those of the field, in order for the actor to be recognised by other participants.



*Fig. 2: Bourdieu's structural model of social fields*  
(adapted from Bourdieu, "Field" 38).

Each of these fields have a degree of autonomy, particularly with regard to sub-fields, such as the field of literary production and the field of sport as a case of large-scale cultural production. However, fields are also relatively determined by other fields, and particularly by the larger fields of power and class relations. Available supply of practices in a field shapes actors' dispositions to the extent that

the logic whereby agents incline towards this or that sporting practice cannot be understood unless their dispositions towards sport, which are themselves one dimension of a particular relation to the body, are reinserted into the unity of the system of dispositions, the habitus, which is the basis from which life-styles are generated. (Bourdieu, "Sports fan": 350)

Disposition designates actors' tendencies of action and thought within a certain stratum or sub-stratum of a social group. The word disposition expresses "the result of an organizing action, with a meaning close to that of words such as structure; it also designates a way of being, a habitual state (especially of the body) and, in particular, a predisposition, tendency, propensity or inclination" (Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* 214 n.1). Dispositions are acquired through practice, and inscribed into actors' body-relations, and, when they interact with the larger economy, the actual practices must negotiate between the larger field

and actors' interests and values.

Confronted with a social event, or with hitherto unfamiliar field of practice, we will have a tendency to respond in a certain manner, and it is these deep-seated patterns of perception and action that Bourdieu refers to as the habitus; a “structuring mechanism that operates from within agents, though it is neither strictly individual nor in itself fully determinative of conduct” (Wacquant 18). If the habitus does not occupy the position of the deep structure in a structuralist system, it serves as an expression of a range of dispositions and values. The habitus is a relatively stable concept, although it is possible for an alteration in habitus as a result of an actor acquiring dispositions necessary for admission into a field of practice. Bourdieu defines the habitus as “the unity of the system of dispositions” (Bourdieu, “Sports fan” 350). The habitus includes mechanisms for transferring schemes from one area to another and methods of absorbing new experiences. Bourdieu explains that habitus should best be understood as

a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions and makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks, thanks to analogical transfers of schemes permitting the solution of similarly shaped problems, and thanks to the unceasing corrections of the results obtained, dialectically produced by those results. (Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* 82-83)

The habitus is an expression of a totality of sensory and evaluatory systems, as well as practices. It follows that the habitus is not a concept that can easily be put into use or operationalised in practical research, since its expression would have to account for the totality of actors' “perceptions, appreciations, and action.” However, we may approach the habitus from the perspective of changes in the totality, or through accounts of dispositions which are productive of the habitus. The habitus may be regarded as the total cluster of

embodied dispositions operative in an actor.

Sport, and, in our case, football, may be approached as a specific, and relatively autonomous, field of production and circulation, generative of its own dispositions. The supply of football, as may be the case with any field of sport practice, consists of public and private institutions and agents, sport associations, producers, vendors of goods and services, entertainments, sociologists, etc. (Bourdieu, “Sports fan” 340-341). The inception of sport as a relatively autonomous field, with a distinct economic and social history, took place around the time when English public schools appropriated “a number of popular – i.e. *vulgar* – games” (ibid. 342), disconnecting them from religious and social functions.<sup>32</sup> The élite appropriated these games by a principle of conversion into “*bodily exercises*, activities which are an end in themselves, a sort of physical art for art’s sake” (ibid.). From the context of the public school, where sport served the purpose of inculcating manly virtues in future leaders, football was autonomised, along with other fields of sport, through processes of rationalisation, calculability, predictability, and a corpus of rules. However, the political philosophy of sport remained intimately linked to the moral ideas of the dominant fractions of the dominant class, and a theory of amateurism (ibid. 343).

Sport may also be seen as a subfield to the field of cultural production, forming a totality of practices in which each sport receives its value in relation to other sports. Such a space may be structured by articulating “the determining elements of the system of preferences,” such as “the degree of engagement of the body” (Bourdieu, “Program” 154), indicating that the reason for the preferred status of sports such as aikido to wrestling among the petty bourgeoisie may be articulated as an opposition between, on the one hand, “airy”, “light”, “distanced” and “gracious” and, on the other, “earthy”, “virile”, “body-to-body” and

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<sup>32</sup> The word sport is derived from the Middle English “divert”, or “disport”, short for *disporten*, hence “to amuse oneself”.

“direct”.<sup>33</sup> The most distinctive value is bestowed on the practice that euphemises violence to the highest degree, so that, in golf, distance is created “by the very logic of a confrontation which excludes all direct contact, even through a ball” (ibid.). In this context, football may be perceived as a predominantly working-class sport, even though it emerged from the English public school system in the late nineteenth century. As Bourdieu points out, such a perspective could easily lead to a substantialist perception of sport. The analyst should therefore attempt to establish homologues, or correspondences, between the space of sport and the space social positions. Changes in practices “can only be understood in this logic, insofar as one of the factors that determine them is the desire to preserve, at the level of these practices, the distances that exist between positions” (ibid.). In other words, the distinction in class relations and the field of power is dominantly reproduced in the subfield of sport, as well as within each sport.

### **Symbolic capital**

Sports operate by their own principles of consecration, a system which is relatively autonomous to the economic field.<sup>34</sup> Each specific sport also distinguishes between differently valued practices, and these evaluative operations are not identical to those of the economic field. Within the field of football, the symbolically consecrated subfield of coaches’ memoirs, academic analyses and historical commentaries constitutes the avant-gardist element by asserting a degree of autonomy to the field. If the logic of the subfield of restricted production, or “production for producers”, in the literary field is that of “the economic world inverted”, then, in relational terms, the logic of the restricted field of football production is more homologous to that of the economic world.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> The example is from Bourdieu, “Program” 154.

<sup>34</sup> See also the discussion of cultural capital in the introduction.

<sup>35</sup> Bourdieu’s model of social fields, and a situation and elaboration of football within the field of cultural



A sociology of sport may be approached from the perspective of the production of supply – including intrinsic properties, such as the rules of the game, and relational properties, such as each sport’s distinctive value within the totality of sporting practices – or from the perspective of demand, by investigating “dispositions associated with the different positions in social space” (Bourdieu, “Program” 159). The logic of demand should be understood in relation to practitioners’ particular relation to the body, reinscribed into the habitus, which is generative of life-styles. With the dissemination of mass-produced and mass-consumed sports events, such as the 1998 Football World Cup, spectators are increasingly reduced to passive comprehension, which, in turn, diminishes their ability to practise the sport itself. In Bourdieu’s view, this situation leads to an increased attention to extrinsic aspects of the sport, such as the result, or which team won the game, and a diminished ability in spectators for the “kind of appreciation that practice gives” (ibid. 160).

### **Naturalisation, *dressage* and *illusio***

Evaluative articulations of the game may refer to defensive and aggressive modes of playing, conceptualisations of individual skills, analogies to models and systems of play which have achieved recognition among prominent actors, etc. Sports discourses are “ways of seeing the world”. For instance, commentators of the Super Bowl, the yearly premier American football event, make use of a highly militarised language. “Phrases such as ‘the bomb,’ ‘the aerial attack,’ ‘advancing into enemy territory,’ ‘the bullet pass,’ and ‘the offensive arsenal’ are common ways of describing and interpreting the ostensibly sporting action” (Jhally 84). These internal evaluative discourses of football are not wholly independent of those of the larger

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production, is also discussed in chapter 3.2. The field of restricted artistic production as a kind of inversion of the economic world is a notion Bourdieu elaborates in *The Rules of Art*. The symbolic logic of the field of literary production constitutes “an economic world inverted: the artist cannot triumph on the symbolic terrain except by losing on the economic terrain” (Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art* 83).

economic field. The most prominent and widely disseminated form of evaluation are comments produced by journalists in broadcasting companies and other media. Sport has a tendency to “*naturalize* forms of organization that have a social and political basis” by promoting, in its mediated version, certain notions of “fair” competition and received notions of relationships between labour, the concept of the team, and authority, by presenting them in an idealised form (ibid. 84-86). As nationalism naturalises the subject as national (Gellner 6), capitalising on the dichotomy natural/fake – where the term “natural” stands in for that which is true or real – biologism naturalises an axiomatic reproductive instinct, as if motherhood constituted the passage into essence of woman, or, relevant to the field of sport, soldierhood naturalised as essence of masculinity.

Football, like any sport, may be perceived as a system of communication, which raises questions of “the awakening of consciousness” (Bourdieu, “Program” 160). The relation between the master and the student is often “entirely oral and visual, or better, mimetic” (ibid. 161), i.e. productive of a particular mode of understanding; an understanding with one’s body. This kind of silent, or practical, form of communication, “from body to body” (ibid. 160), precedes the symbolic, and makes appeals to knowledges that are already *in* the body, or situated in the habitus. Football may then be perceived as a kind of mimesis, or as a sort of symbolic gymnastics, which, as the rite or the dance, or any form of artistic production, “always contains something *ineffable*, [...] something which communicates, so to speak, from body to body, i.e. on the hither side of words and concepts, and which pleases (or displeases) without concepts” (Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* 2). As with the practice of gift exchange in Kabyle society, each signification receives its meaning only by through the response it triggers off, producing a kind of subconscious or pre-symbolic communication (ibid. 5; “Program”, 160).

The sensory and evaluatory systems of the habitus may afford the appropriate site for an investigation into this kind of bodily communication, and an investigation into a “theory of belief” (“Program” 161). Obedience, produced through bodily disciplines “consists in large part in belief, and belief is what the body (*corps*) concedes even when the mind (*l’esprit*) says no” (ibid.). Football, as is the case with all sports, offers ways of obtaining a consent from the body that the mind may otherwise refuse. This kind of “domestication”, or *dressage*, of the body, may serve to explain the space dominant regimes “grant to corporeal practices, which help to somatize the social by symbolizing it, and aim at reinforcing social orchestration through its bodily and collective mimesis” (ibid.).

When we approach the pleasures of the couched practitioner, or spectator to mass mediated sport, it may be necessary to construct an apparatus that will enable us to account for significant differences between everyday and scientific interpretations of sport spectacles. Bourdieu makes use of the term *illusio* to account for such discrepancies. *Illusio* “directs the gaze toward the apparent producer – painter, composer, writer – and prevents us asking who created this ‘creator’ and the magic power of transubstantiation with which the ‘creator’ is endowed,” (Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art* 167) and may serve to explain the supernatural powers that are often ascribed to elite athletes. *Illusio* indicates that all actors, including spectators and sociologists of sport, are already interested in the field, or game,<sup>36</sup> at the moment of engagement, even if our investment is never transparent, or non-ideological, since we will never finally arrive at an answer to the question of who produced the producer.

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<sup>36</sup> An element of illusion may be necessary for us to participate in any field of social practice. Implicit in the term social actor is the notion of having a stake in the game: “To understand the notion of interest, it is necessary to see that it is opposed not only to that of disinterestedness or gratuitousness but also to that of *indifference*. To be indifferent is to be unmoved by the game [...]. Indifference is an axiological state, an ethical state of nonpreference as well as a state of knowledge in which I am not capable of differentiating the stakes proposed. Such was the goal of the Stoics: to reach a state of ataraxy (*ataraxy* means the fact of not being troubled). *Illusio* is the very opposite of ataraxy: it is to be invested, taken in and by the game [...]. Each field calls forth and gives life to a specific form of interest, a specific *illusion*, as tacit recognition of the value of the stakes of the game as practical mastery of its rules.” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 116-117).

### 3.1. The subject

The traditional reading of Bourdieu has emphasised a tension between an agent, on the one hand, and structure, on the other. Theorists such as Bourdieu, Giddens, Bhaskar, etc., have been compared with each other with regard to how they are situated on a continuum that emphasises the autonomous capacity of agents to act or the limiting effects of structuring structures (King 216-231). The reception of Bourdieu's work has highlighted the structuring elements of his approach to society against other theorists who have put more weight on an autonomous actor.

We have previously discussed the knowing subject in Bourdieu and the sense of fields characterised by a dispersal of differential subject positions (chapter 3). Here we shall go into further detail regarding the constitution of subjectivity in Bourdieu and compare it with the kind of subject we encounter in discourse theory. Finally, we will ask how the kind of relational approach to agency we find in Bourdieu can help us understand the formation of differential social identities.

The subject in Bourdieu is situated between the poles of objectivism and subjectivism. The two terms may need some explanation. Wacquant defines subjectivism in terms of a sports metaphor: in this kind of approach to behaviour there is "no objective moment, and the soccer 'field' remains a purely phenomenological form [in Merleau-Ponty], grasped strictly from the standpoint of the acting agent" (p. 22). While apprehending the game solely from the perspective of the player, subjectivism fails to bridge the "internal and external structures, here between the sense of the game of the player and the actual constellation of the field" (ibid.). Subjectivism here receives a meaning close to individualism, as it assumes the perspective of individual players as the sole source of meaning for social analysis.

In *Outline of a Theory of Practice* Bourdieu shows how the concept of habitus intervenes to disrupt a subjectivism that postulates “voluntarism or spontaneism” (p. 82). Again, the presupposition of an individual acting spontaneously and voluntarily is complicated by the habitus, “the product of history [which] produces individual and collective practices” (ibid.). The assumption of a spontaneously or voluntarily acting individual is further specified as in opposition to Bourdieu’s approach in *The Logic of Practice*. Here he criticises “the postulate that rational action can have no other principle than the intention of rationality and the free, informed calculation of a rational subject” as absurd. Rational actor theory – the idea that individuals act voluntarily and freely as rational agents in so far as they maximise economic profit at minimum cost – relates actions directly to economic interest and disregards the possibility that “practices can have other principles than mechanical causes or conscious ends” (“The imaginary”: 50).<sup>37</sup> Again, subjectivism in the guise of rational actor theory is unable to appreciate the social structures that envelop subjective actions. A term such as “field of action” becomes a descriptive term for a physical space without theoretical status (Wacquant 22 n39).<sup>38</sup>

Objectivism is a term Bourdieu uses to describe a mechanistic imposition of structures without any recourse to subjective agency. In Wacquant’s words, objectivism poses an *ersatz* subject who passively supports “forces that mechanically work out their independent logic” (1992: 8). In *Outline of a Theory of Practice* Bourdieu describes as objectivist those approaches which enable a position to social analysis that breaks with actors’ subjective – *doxic* – experience of their social world (pp. 1-30). The objective truths of social actions are inaccessible (in *explicit* form) to those who inhabit the social world of analysis. Bourdieu calls

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<sup>37</sup> See also the elaboration of the logics of cultural and symbolic capital in chapter 1 and 3, above, which, in Bourdieu’s cultural analysis, are attempts to demonstrate that actors may obey “an economic logic without obeying narrowly economic interests” (“The imaginary”: 50).

<sup>38</sup> Chapter 3, above, discusses the terms habitus and field in further detail.

for a type of analysis that combines this kind of objective truth with an understanding of “structured dispositions within which those [objective] structures are actualized and which tend to reproduce them” (ibid. 3). An economic determinism that leaves no room for contingent articulation is also at odds with the kind of discourse analysis posited by Laclau in that it treats as historically necessary that which can only come into being as a result of political processes.<sup>39</sup>

There are two points to be drawn from this exposition of these terms in Bourdieu. Firstly, subjectivism and objectivism do not occupy the same plane of analysis in his work. While subjectivism tends to be associated with a phenomenology bereft of social context or a model of rational choice agency that assumes agents that act with the singular purpose of maximising individual economic benefit – what Bourdieu refers to as “narrow economic self-interest” (“The imaginary” 50) – objectivism is located on a plane of analysis that appears necessary but not sufficient in a holistic social or cultural analysis. Subjectivism can be rejected, objectivism seems necessary. The way beyond objectivism is to reincorporate what has been called lived experience, or the kind of practical logic that actors employ in order to make sense of their life worlds.

Secondly, it follows that Bourdieu’s style of analysis is not reducible to some location on a continuum from individualism to structure-without-agents. The latter, the kind of objectivism Wacquant refers to as operating an *ersatz* (dummy) subject, is acknowledged by Bourdieu as a first step in the objectivisation process any social analyst must partake in. To step out of the immediate subjective experience of those who participate in the game entails removing oneself from the *doxa* – the established truth – of the the field, so as to objectify the structures that dominate it. The simplified division between agent and structure outlined by

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<sup>39</sup> Laclau and Mouffe offer a refutation of economic determinism in “Post-Marxism without apologies”. See also comments on articulation and discourse analysis in chapter 3, above.

King, and alluded to by Wacquant, has tended to reproduce the dichotomous relationship Bourdieu opposed between subjectivism and objectivism. It is only when the subjective experiences of actors – their practical logic or *feel for the game* – are reincorporated into the analysis that we can achieve the level of truth aimed for by Bourdieu when he urges the cultural analyst to establish what he refers to as total social facts.<sup>40</sup>

The debate over structure and agency has juxtaposed a structure without agent to an individualistic, atomistic agent bereft of context. One way Bourdieu has overcome this false dichotomy is by pointing out how structures are not only structuring of agents' acts, but also structured – i.e. in turn circumscribed and not the final determinants of acts.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, one misreading of Bourdieu, implied by King's association of Bourdieu with Giddens, assumes that there is "a little bit of individualism" retained in Bourdieu's cultural analysis. This is misguided for two reasons: as shown above Bourdieu rejects subjectivism on the grounds that it does not sufficiently account for the contexts and structures agents operate within, and, additionally, Bourdieu's critique of substantialism effectively bars any recourse to an individual actor without context. As David Swartz notes

Bourdieu criticizes incessantly what he calls "substantialism," "realism," or the "spontaneous" theory of knowledge as a key obstacle to developing genuine scientific knowledge of the social world. For Bourdieu, the substantialist vision of social reality designates an epistemology that "recognizes no other reality than that which is directly given to the intuition of ordinary experience."<sup>42</sup> It focuses on the "realities of ordinary sense-experience, and by individuals in particular." Substantialist thinking "privileges substances" over relationships, for "it treats the properties attached to agents -- occupation, age, sex, qualifications -- as *forces* independent of

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<sup>40</sup> See the remarks on the concept "practical logic" and "total social facts" in the opening of chapter 3, above.

<sup>41</sup> We can perhaps say that the apparent structures are "overdetermined" by the field of class relations (see also the discussions of field theory in chapter 3, above).

<sup>42</sup> The quote is from Pierre Bourdieu, "What makes a social class? On the theoretical and practical existence of groups," *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 32, 1987: 3.

the relationship within which they ‘act’”.<sup>43</sup> (Swartz 61)

The limit of King’s engagement with Bourdieu is due to the too quick association of agency with a simplistic notion of an individual, the result of which is to make unfounded claims with regards to Bourdieu’s alleged legitimization of decontextualised individuals as elements of cultural analysis. The critique of substantialism indicates that behind the term “individual” in Bourdieu, there cannot be found the kind of substance, or essence, we associate with individualism. The individual remains a movable piece in a conglomerate of concepts available to the cultural analyst.

The use of Bourdieu to justify social analysis premised on individualism – an approach that treats the properties of agents as detached from social contexts – disregards the critique of how the individual in sociology has been used as a tool to abstract and reduce to objects those who are studied by the cultural analyst. In this view, sociology is one of a number of ways in which practitioners have been reduced to individuals. This is a reductionist view: the objects of analysis (its “subjects”) are already presupposed as individuals, and this is why sociology has been solicited as a tool to reinforce a certain view of society – namely one that assumes an atomistic or non-existent society inhabited by individuals bereft of social contexts in which they act.

The insufficiency of this kind of understanding of society makes necessary the social force employed through sociology, but also through the various manifestations of sports in schools, in order to establish the individual as a privileged harbinger of meaning and order. The gap between actors’ lived experience and the framework of analysis offered by the dominant mode of understanding society is tentatively joined by the production of belief: consent to the kind of social analysis that privileges individualism is solicited through social

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<sup>43</sup> Bourdieu, *Distinction* 22.



practices such as sport. It is through school sports, among other practices, that we are “hailed into being” as individuals<sup>44</sup>, and through such practices we are made to believe with our bodies. Individualist interpretations of the social are habituated and naturalised, and this is why an individualist perspective on society in turn appears commonsensical to practitioners. Cultural analysis should be concerned with objectifying these kinds of taken for granted assumptions, which appear *doxic* to those who inhabit the field we investigate, but which nevertheless remain at the level of voluntarism, as it disregards the coercive element of social orchestration.<sup>45</sup>

In addition to the relational argument against individualism in Bourdieu, one should also note the diverse uses of agent in his writing. The agent can be abstract, such as when Bourdieu describes fields as exhibiting the ability to attract practitioners. Is not the field itself the active agent here? While explicitly rejecting rational choice theory and substantialism, such as the attribution of substance to an individual outside or prior to its socially contextualised acts, Bourdieu also relies on a use of social agency in his writing that is multidirectional – power flows both from the subject, while it remains structured – and inclusive of subjects that are conceptual in addition to substantive.

In this sense, Bourdieu opened for a kind of agency that can be described as a “process of subjectivising” (Wright 9-28). This subject has no fixed substantive content, and is defined by flux and change, rather than solidity and fixity. Pursuing such a notion of subjectivity inexorably leads to the question of its “fragile consistency[:] for if the subject is not a ‘placed’ entity – either as a ‘mass’, or as their representative in a party – but rather an ensemble of actions, what holds it together?” (ibid. 12). By defining the subjective in reference to a

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<sup>44</sup> See further discussion of the coming-into-being of individuals in modern thought in chapter 7, where, following Foucault, schools are identified as one of the first arenas where national subjects were trained and examined, and thereby brought into existence as individuals.

<sup>45</sup> See also further discussions of the term social orchestration in the introduction and in chapter 7 on the regulation of desire through spectacular sport.

process rather than a fixed, “placed” entity, the subject may encompass “a series of paintings or mathematical formulae as well as a collection of political militants” (ibid.). Crucially, the subject is no longer reduced to a singular and decontextualised individual, but defined in terms of structure or, even, assemblages of acts.

This sense of subjectivity is closely aligned to the notion of subjectivity operative within discourse theory. To Foucault discourse is the medium through which power produces subjects. The active agent in this view is, again, not primarily the subject, but discourse and a power that is productive through it. Discourse is productive of a dispersal of subject positions and the totality of subject positions is exhaustive of the possible perspectives practitioners may hold.<sup>46</sup> A subject position indicates both a “conceptual repertoire and a location for persons within the structure” (Davies and Harré 46). The notion of a discourse characterised by a dispersal of possible subject positions is strictly analogous to Bourdieu’s field theory, where each field is inhabited by agents that occupy a set number of finite positions. In the field of sports Bourdieu shows how the field can be conceptualised according to the space of possible body-relations: by contrasting boxing with aikido or tai-chi, Bourdieu shows how attachments to these sports signifies a preference for a particular body-relation – or nexus – such as hard/soft or direct/indirect.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> See further discussion of the term “subject position” in relation to sport in chapter 3 above.

<sup>47</sup> See also the discussion of the space of sports in chapter 8 and of Bourdieu’s field theory in chapter 3 above.

### 3.2. Case: Reading the referee

The quasi-legal status of the referee makes this figure an interesting case to distinguish between various approaches to sport. In this chapter I will primarily be interested in juxtaposing the analytic philosophy of sport proposed by Bernard Suits with the practical approach to cultural analysis put forth in the work of Bourdieu.

As a preface, spectacular sports events tended to serve as instances of social orchestration to Bourdieu (“Program” 161). Therefore, football on this level can be seen as an instrument to naturalise relations of dominance. The referees’ self-perceptions add to the quasi-legal position of this role: as a mediator between opposing interests, the analogy to the judge in a court room may be envisioned. A central concern seems to be how to get the body to remember a voluntarist social imaginary.

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Put simply, football is a game of 22 players divided into two opposing teams, and their actions are overseen by a referee. Its sphere of activity is limited to the pitch, to the duration of the football game, and by rules which circumscribe the players’ actions. These rules are upheld by the referee. As a social field, football consists of more than the 22 players and a referee, and it takes place in more locations than merely the pitch. It also includes the media, spectators, administrators, sponsors, and it is enabled by a whole legal and socio-economic system around it.

In the analytical model, referees embody the law, upholding the rules of the game, while, in a social model, they are agents with a specific habitus, which is different from, but also related to, the habitus of the 22 players.<sup>48</sup> It is the specificity of the referee’s habitus that is of interest to us here, because, if referees are defined by what they do, one question is how

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<sup>48</sup> Habitus is a term used in the cultural analysis of Pierre Bourdieu. For a discussion of the term, see chapter 3 and Swartz (pp. 94-116).

it is possible to produce practitioners that enact the laws in a uniform way. If we gave someone a rulebook and a black shirt, would they act the same way as other, more seasoned, referees? If this *habitus* comes into being through a game-like activity where the necessary dispositions are embodied in the subjects, referees must acquire and master these dispositions in order to succeed as referees. These dispositions predispose practitioners to act without reflective thinking – a kind of automated practice. This practice is bodily and it tends to reproduce the state of the field as it was at their point of entry into it.

If referees articulate themselves as teachers or judges, are the relations between their roles as referees and their roles as teachers and judges external to each other? In other words, is it a relation of analogy, a linguistic relation, between football and these two fields? Judith Butler argues that naming is a productive activity, and that this kind of performativity, the act of naming, is the aspect of discourse that has the capacity to produce what it names.<sup>49</sup> When referees see themselves as teachers, they may well *be* teachers. When they see themselves as judges, they may well *be* judges. These acts of naming are also acts of performances, situated in a space where the language becomes a part of the body. At this moment, Butler argues, it becomes impossible to distinguish clearly between the language to describe the role and the role itself. Rather than perceiving football merely as a game, then, it could be read as a play where referees act out roles similar to those of the chorus in the ancient Greek drama – they get to warn players, they are aware of the script before it is acted out, and they know more about the totality of the play than the other actors. They are empowered to name the acts of those with stakes in this particular game. If football, in the analytical model, was like a board game, with clearly distinguished and distinguishable roles assigned to each piece, with Butler it resembles a play – a play where each role has the potential of being rescripted as the play unfolds.

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<sup>49</sup> For a closer discussion of Judith Butler's notion of performativity, see e.g. Osbourne and Segal 2003.

This chapter is an attempt to understand how referees fit in to the game. I will use three approaches to social analysis as tools in a reading of interviews with international referees. I will discuss, partly, how we are to understand the role of the referee in football, and, partly, the relationships between elements of the three approaches to the social. These approaches are not necessarily in conflict with each other, but, rather, are complementary ways of understanding the referee's role in the game. Adding to the analytical model of sports, which sees the game predominantly as populated by actors with a stake in the outcome, and the contention that football is a *social* field, inhabited by structured subjectivities, Butler argues that each subjectivity is also a participant in an ongoing struggle to name, or define, the field. This chapter discusses ways of understanding the role of referees in relation to these approaches to the social.<sup>50</sup>

The purpose of this chapter is to show that the actual use that referees make of their practice in football complicates the analytical approach to the game. Referees perceive themselves as performing a multitude of roles on the field, and their self-perception becomes objectified through the use of the performative speech act. By naming themselves as educators or judges, they establish these roles as tenable for practitioners of football, and make it possible to perform the kinds of practices associated with these roles on the pitch.

Analytical philosopher Bernard Suits constructs football as a board game, with pieces that have distinct and non-overlapping functions. The referee, then, has the role of arbiter between the players. With no stake in the outcome of the game, referees are not properly part of it – they are in some important ways *outside* the game. Suits's concern is to achieve some analytical understanding of the game. In his model, the players are those who try to get the ball into the opponent's goal. Referees are keepers of the boundaries of the game. These

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<sup>50</sup> While Pierre Bourdieu discusses sports in detail in several essays, Judith Butler does not discuss sport in particular, but discusses Bourdieu's approach in more general terms.

boundaries are those rules Suits calls constitutive of the game, because, while it would be possible to use any kind of method to place the ball inside the opponents' goal, it would only be football if the means by which this end was achieved was in accordance with these rules. Constitutive rules lay down obstacles to achieve a certain desired state of affairs. These obstacles, for instance, not moving the ball around with hands or arms, make it more difficult to achieve the desired state of affairs. And it is the referee's role to ensure that these constitutive rules are adhered to. In a strictly analytical approach to the sport, football assigns circumscribed and clearly defined tasks to the participating pieces, and each piece's modus of operation is circumscribed by the game's constitutive rules.

If one of the 22 players were to score by means of their hand, for instance, it would in effect not be a part of the game we call football, since the means through which the desired state of affairs was achieved was in violation of the game's constitutive rules. In consequence, the referee may designate the player as an outsider through various sanctions, the most serious of which being expelling the player from the game.

### **Role perception**

This perspective on the referee is dominant in referees' articulation of their own roles. They emphasise that they "see the game from a different perspective as a referee as to a player" (McLeod), that the pitch appears similar to the courtroom (Pedersen), and that referees must make decisions that are legitimate and acceptable to both parties, even the losing team (Nkosi). Representing football's judicial branch, they are neutral with regard to any particular game they referee, and must remain disinterested as to the outcome of the game. Suits's model of sports is one dominant way of articulating the referee in the interviews, but it is also accompanied by a range of other uses of football. In this way of approaching the interviews

int his study, the articulations, examples, or illustrations given by the interviewees should be considered as metaphors that describe their activities as referees.

To Pierre Bourdieu, these articulations can be seen as expressions of a refereeing habitus. Bourdieu defines habitus as “a system of durable, transposable dispositions” generative of practice (*Logic* 53).<sup>51</sup> These are acquired at entry into the field through initiation, supervised game-like activity, and peer-interaction. South African referee Ian McLeod relates his visual capacity as a referee to an experience formative of his inauguration into refereeing. While training to be a teacher, McLeod had ambitions of coaching football in extra-mural programmes. Wanting to further his knowledge about the rules of the game, McLeod completed a refereeing course. His fellow referees implored him to make a choice between coaching and refereeing.

My colleagues, who were refereeing me at that stage, said to me “Ian, now, we think you should rather give up playing football, because you’re an embarrassment to the referees, because you always moan at referees and complain” and they said I should concentrate on refereeing, because [...] you go further as a referee than as a football player, and [...] to really get involved in refereeing you have to, you can’t play and referee, because you see the game from a different perspective as a referee as to a player. (McLeod)

As a defining moment in McLeod’s entry into refereeing, it describes an inauguration into an activity that is relatively autonomous from those of the other agents – the 22 players, administrators, spectators, and so on. His change of role from player to referee entailed a new kind of observation.

If I’m watching a football match, a televised game or if I’m at a game live, I’m concentrating a lot on the referee.[...] I obviously enjoy the match, but my eyes are always on the referee, what

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<sup>51</sup> See chapter 1.3 for an more detailed discussion of Bourdieu's terminology.

positions he takes up, how he controls the situations, but I suppose after 22 years that's natural. (McLeod)

This naturalisation of a mode of observation demonstrates how dispositions shape perception. Also, the dispositions that are dominantly required, such as neutrality, objectivity and disinterest, are reinforced through supervised, game-like activity. When describing his work, the South African National Referees Coordinator Philemon Nkosi explained how supervised practice and certification programmes are coordinated by the national body.

We have the selection committee, we have the appointment committee, we have the review committee, and also the technical committee, they are all sub-committees. The main committee is the National Referees Committee, which is a standing committee at SAFA. So what I do is that I coordinate whatever is being decided there, put together and arrange meetings thereof, and also coordinate the training schedule for the referees. You know, we need to develop our referees, maintain the good standard that I believe we have, and show that it is sustained. (Nkosi)

These practices produce a system of durable, transposable dispositions. These dispositions integrate past experience, and “function at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions” (Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* 82-83). Dispositions, the component parts of habitus, describe tendencies of action and thought within a certain stratum or substratum of a social group. They are inscribed into agent's body relations and may appear as natural to the agents themselves, such as McLeod's naturalised mode of game observation, and the matrix of perception established through the administrative work of Philemon Nkosi.

Peer-interaction among referees is another mechanism to produce cohesion among subjects, aiming to achieve a relative degree of autonomy in a larger social field. Norwegian referee Rune Pedersen describes a sense of community among his peers. “We support and



discuss with each other,” he says, as there is “positive rivalry, a degree of competition to be among” the referees. Specifically, peer-interaction among referees is concerned with how to enforce the rule-book, how to cope with pressure from other participants in the game, and so on. Pedersen notes that it is necessary to have “the courage to make difficult decisions, and to take decisions when something happens, and not be frightened of negative remarks” from spectators, participants, and in the media (ibid. 51). This kind of interaction among seasoned referees serves to further strengthen the relative autonomy of their peer-group.

For agents to achieve success, they are inclined to reproduce the state of the social field as it was when they entered into it. The field reproduces itself by generating a habitus that is in conformity with the current state of the field. A successful agent has success precisely because he or she has mastered the rules that apply in the social field. The rules have become a part of the players’ disposition to act, they have become embodied. Referees, then, must take up and reproduce the rules that are laid down for the social field in order to become part of it. Their dispositions are shaped by the structure of the field, and these structures are, again, configured by the economic field – the field of class relations.

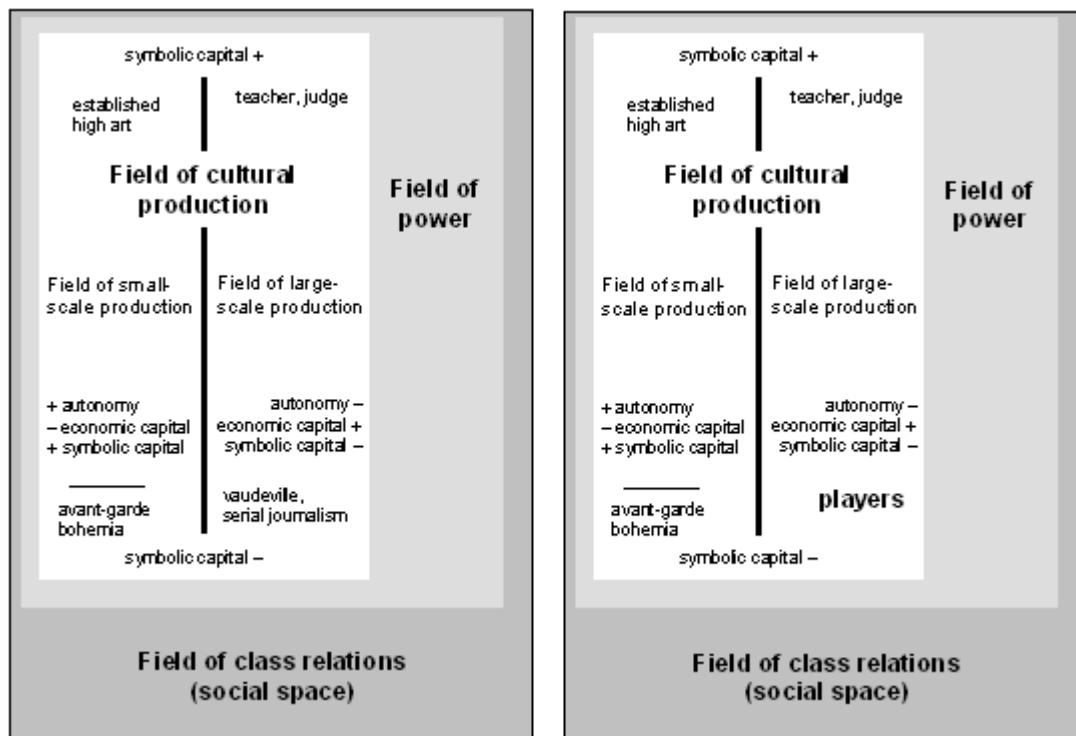


Fig. 3: Bourdieu's model of social fields and football situated within the field of cultural production. Adapted from Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art* (p. 124).

While some dispositions essential to referees may conform to Suits's model of sports practice, these actors' positions are structured by fields that circumscribe their operation. In Bourdieu's model, football is a cultural practice in large-scale production. These kinds of cultural practices have a low degree of autonomy and symbolic capital, but could generate large economic capital. As Bourdieu shows, the field of cultural production should be located within the field of power, and both these fields are subject to the inclinations of the larger social field, or the economy (*The Rules of Art* 124).

Football is a field of large-scale production in Bourdieu's model, but it is a field where referees are positioned as consecrated practitioners, as practitioners endowed with a particular set of tools for action, but also as symbolic endowments.<sup>52</sup> Their position as consecrated practitioners enables them to accumulate symbolic capital in distinction to the 22 players.

<sup>52</sup> For a discussion of the term consecration in relation to the nineteenth-century literary avant-garde in France, see Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art* 122-123.

Pierre Bourdieu's approach to social analysis enables us to configure football as a social field, inhabited by actors engaged in role-playing activities. Apart from acquiring dispositions through a game-like activity, these actors accumulate social capital that they may invest in practices in adjacent fields, such as in social interaction with fans and spectators of the sport, in salary negotiations, and so on.<sup>53</sup>

The referees expressed concerns about the role of football in the larger social community. To the South African referees, football served as a sort of cohesive mechanism. Previously set apart by the racialising discourses of separate development, or *apartheid*, football may serve to bridge divisions in the community. McLeod found that "football has a vast role to play in bringing people together of all races" (p. 14). Philemon Nkosi defined the social function of sports as a

unifying platform, it brings people together. Now, bringing people together, you must not set them apart by coming up with bad decisions. [...] Also the masses need to understand the laws of the game, because, if you don't understand, you will say, "Look that was a goal," and maybe it was not a goal. And you get a guy who's [...] literate on the laws of the game, and who says, "Why do you say it's a goal?", and you can't describe that. (p. 21)

As an educational exercise, then, football provides an arena where acts can be negotiated within a common legal code. The "masses", in Nkosi's terminology, need literacy about the laws of the game so as to be able to articulate why a particular act was in accordance with the law or not. To Nkosi, then, referees are positioned as educators, vouching for the neutrality of the rules in relation to any specific application of them. football is a means through which the "masses" may appreciate the utility of the rule-book. Rune Pedersen finds that football

"solves social problems," not the least because it preempts other less positive activities (p.

<sup>53</sup> In a discussion of bourgeois lifestyle, Bourdieu defines social capital as "a capital of social connections, honourability and respectability that is often essential in winning and keeping the confidence of high society, and with it a clientele, and may be drawn on, for example, in making a political career" (*Distinction* 122).

49). To Bourdieu, these highly capitalised roles – the judge, teacher and negotiator – remain analogies to their dispositions, ways to describe metaphorically what referees do, or as attempts to set up homologies with fields outside football.<sup>54</sup> Referees' subjectivities remain subordinated by the larger fields of power and class relations.

### **Reformulating the refereeing subject**

These articulations are more than linguistic superstructures to disguise the economic basis of the social. Social theorist Judith Butler suggests that a certain “magic of social performativity” may undermine the stability of Bourdieu’s model of “economic inclination” as structuring of social acts. If dispositions are incorporated knowledges and inclinations to practice located in the subjective body, how is it possible to distinguish between subjective and objective dimensions of that body? Butler asks whether the theoretical distinction of the social and the linguistic can be separated in practice.<sup>55</sup> If competency in the practices of the field is defined as submission to order, practices become unthinkable, since actors are inclined through immediate submission to make a virtue out of necessity. Butler suggests that referees’ practices are acts of social performativity, enabling subjects to participate in an “ongoing political contestation and reformulation of the subjects” (p. 125).

Since these subjects bring their football personas to other social spaces, referees may make use of their social capital in contexts other than in their sporting practice strictly speaking. Ian McLeod makes use of his celebrity status during visits to unfamiliar locations.

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<sup>54</sup> Bourdieu uses the term homology to explain relations between the structure of a given field and the structure of the fields of power and class relations: “The field of cultural production produces its most important effects through the play of *homologies* between the fundamental opposition which gives the field its structure and the oppositions structuring the field of power and the field of class relations.” (“Field” 44). Homology is also used to conceptualize relations among relatively autonomous fields and “homologies in strategies” (Swartz 129-130).

<sup>55</sup> Laclau and Mouffe also do not distinguish between linguistic and other forms of discursive articulation, but instead hold that it is the totality of social practices that make up discursive space.

I can go into any home in the country, I believe, particularly in the townships, and they will welcome me. [...] And I hope I brought out a reputation of being an honest person, a person of integrity and a person hopefully they enjoy seeing refereeing, enjoy meeting socially. (p.14)

Rune Pedersen finds that his role as a referee shapes his relations outside the football pitch. If he had been involved in refereeing on a full-time basis, he “would have become a particular kind of person. I [...] find it very helpful to have a social circuit that includes people who [...] talk about other things, and do other things” (p. 47). Football has uses beyond the game itself to those who practise it. These uses are personal and social, and referees themselves reflect on the difficulties they have in maintaining a strict separation of their roles as referees and their lives outside the game.

Also, referees look to positions of authority to explain their own role. When we perceive the referee as a judge, football appears as a model of the legal system in civil society, and in accordance with Suits’s view on sports. As educators, referees serve to disseminate a way of thinking about the law-book, enabling participants and spectators to argue for their perception of the game within the strictures of the law. As negotiators, referees are representatives of an apparatus that is both larger than them, and also enables diverse strategies to solve stand-offs between participants in the game. The judge, the teacher and the diplomat are all empowered positions, privileged in relation to their subjects in terms of knowledge and possibilities of practice.

Understanding football as a board game fails to explain how referees make use of their sports activities outside the pitch, and it also provides no guide to how referees maintain the sort of uniform practice that is required by the board-game metaphor. Bourdieu’s notion of habitus serves to explain how dispositions are transposed to locations outside the football pitch, and his concept of symbolic capital aids in understanding what these dispositions are,

and how they are productive of uniform practice. The kind of reproduction of the state of the field that is required of consecrated practitioners suggests that referees' acts are guided by structures which leaves little or no room for creative or performative acts. Referees name their activities in ways that agree with Bourdieu's field theory, but also in ways that constitute creative re-significations of their practices.

Bourdieu's practical approach to cultural analysis enables us to move from an abstract analytical understanding of the game to the self-perceptions of actual actors – their practical sense of the game. However, their sense of their roles are more than a mere representation of pre-discursive identities: as with sexual identities, their self-perception is not restricted to moments that came prior to their self-constitution in discourse. While the antinomy male/female is produced in discourse and not prior to it,<sup>56</sup> the perception of the referee is produced through practice, and not limited to some abstract rule given before the game begins.

The roles of judges, teachers and negotiators are not merely linguistic representations of pre-discursive "facts", but acts of naming, acts of putting into play novel self-perceptions. When referees see themselves as teachers, they may well *come into being* as teachers, and not merely referees. To recognise this distinction is to question the division of the social and the linguistic in Bourdieu's approach. If habitus is embodied, its articulations are part of the body, and not wholly separable from it. Language, then, is more than an abstract, analytical system. Meaning is relational and produced in and through practice.

This sense of discourse will form the basis of our approach to nationalism in the following chapter, where the assumption is, precisely, that nations are discursive constructions that are articulated in response to particular social contexts – such as an oppressive imperial

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<sup>56</sup> Chapter 5 offers a detailed discussion of the discursive production of sex and gender.

power. Attempts to legitimate nations with reference to a point outside and prior to discourse will inevitably be confronted with the social constitution of that point. References to “golden age” events are made intelligible through the prism of nationalism, and therefore constructed as a moment in a nationalist pre-history.

#### **4. Nationalisms: Theories of national communities**

Bourdieu's interest in nations lay primarily with the effects of their institutional expression: the nation state and nation-wide public institutions. Through these institutions the dominant class reproduces and entrenches its privileges:

the institutionalized strategies of distinction through which “status groups” seek to make *de facto* differences permanent and quasi-natural, are there for legitimate, by symbolically enhancing the effect of distinction associated with occupying a rare position in the social structure, are the self-consciousness of the dominant class. (1990 *Logic*: 138)

National symbols, narratives, and so on, therefore feature as legitimating discourses: they tend to naturalise differences that are produced in the field of class relations. With regard to spectacular sports, Bourdieu notes that the “theatricalization which always accompanies the exercise of power extends to all practices, and particularly to consumption” (ibid. 139). Nationalist discourses should then be perceived as overarching discourses that stretch across the various fields of cultural production. As discourses legitimating differences in the economic field, nationalism should be considered as a property of the field of power (fig. 2 above shows how Bourdieu configures the various fields).

In this chapter I will develop a discursive approach to nationalism and apply such a model to the South African formation. It is centrally concerned with Benedict Anderson's view of nations as contingent, limited and sovereign communities. It proceeds from discussing the founding elements of nationalism, its relation to articulation and narrative, and the main components of Anderson's model – social antagonism, vernacular languages, and a novel conception of time. It then proceeds with a comparison of Anderson's model with the typologies of nationalism proposed by Eugene Kamenka and Peter Alter. The second part



offers a historical discussion of Afrikaner nationalism from its early inception in the 1870s until its dismantling with the 1994 elections, and investigates how apartheid should be classified with our taxonomies. We then inquire into the meaning of 1994, and ask in what sense this year could provide us with a messianic moment beyond which the violent practices of this national formation's past can be eschewed.

Nationalism shares properties with religious and ethnic communities, with ideologies such as socialism and liberal, and with *ad hoc* organisations that strive to achieve specific objectives and that wither away when their goals are perceived as completed. Nations are “deep horizontal comradeships” (Anderson, *Imagined Communities* 7), expecting a specific statement of solidarity in face of other groups (Alter 6). It distinguishes between the in-group (believers or nationals) and the out-group (heathens or foreigners), and it offers sets of originary myths, founding fathers, and other forms of symbolic clothing, the immersion in which signifies ideological adherence among nationalists. The difficulty in defining nationalism lies not only with its ideological incoherence or “philosophical poverty” (Anderson, *Imagined Communities* 5), but also with the conflicting purposes and uses of nationalism at different times and locations. Is nationalism emancipatory or repressive, a sentiment or a movement, authoritarian or democratic, progressive or reactionary? Are the specific demands and expressions of particular nationalisms so incongruent that it would really be more appropriate to speak of nationalisms in the plural?

Nationalisms have emerged relatively recently. While some nationalists claim to represent communities that “loom out of an immemorial past, and [...] glide into a limitless future” (Anderson, *Imagined Communities* 11-12), it is invariably the case that nations emerge out of social and political formations that have lost their purpose or that have become irrelevant at a particular moment. While there are still significant disagreements on the precise

emergence of nationalism, the recent historical emergence of nationalism as ideology and type of community raises the question of whether it will be a time when it has lost its capacity to generate hopes, emotions and actions (Alter 4), or if different communities and ideologies will emerge that may take over these abilities. In the case of South Africa, which will be the case of analysis in the second part of this chapter, we may ask if popular notions and political pursuance of a regional identity could finally take over the social role that nationalism has played in the history of the country.

Nationalism is often understood as the logical outcome, in the form of an ideology upholding a kind of social organisation, of the European Enlightenment. Eugene Kamenka, argues that nationalism “brought Asia, Africa and the Pacific into relation with European history[,] making them part of a universal history”. To him, nationalism is a “modern and initially a European phenomenon”, which is “best understood in relation to the French revolution of 1789” (p. 3). As the historical origin of nationalism, the French revolution asserted the principle of self-determination, and conceived of national autonomy as an aggregate of individual citizens’ ability to participate in the common political life of the new republic. When Kamenka chooses to uphold the French revolution of 1789 as the founding moment of nationalism he indicates that this “universalising” movement originated in Europe, and that classically liberal virtues, such as individual freedom and self-determination, should be regarded as cornerstones of this novel political ideology.

It is as if nationalism as a field of academic study doubles the effort common to nationalisms of seeking justification for its existence in originary myths and founding fathers, and that these narratives and forebears are somehow to be found in Europe. Peter Alter, in his typology of nationalisms, find the roots of nationalism in the Greek revolt against Ottoman rule, and the articulation of a new Greek subjectivity in the writings of Prince Alexander

Ypsilantis. Here Alter finds the nation invoked as a vehicle for “liberal ideology of opposition,” (p. 6) incorporating ideals of (national) autonomy and (individual) equality. The origins of these ideas, Alter finds, lies in the French revolutionary ideals. However, if it is the case that the roots of nationalism are “without doubt” to be found in Europe, how do we explain the early instances of nationalism in the Peru, Brazil and the USA?

### **Nationalism, articulation and narrative**

In our view, nationalisms are simply all discourses promoting or disseminating the existence of specific nations. This definition is designed to emphasise nationalism as a set of practices, observing Ernest Gellner’s advice (p. 7) that the national community is best approached not so much in the way of formal definitions, but rather with a view to what it does. As a discourse, we may approach nationalism as a “structured totality resulting from articulatory practice” (Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* 105). Nationalism is expressed in language – as expressions of national identity, as differentiations between the national community and foreigners, and through uttering particular national symbols, such as the national anthem and national founding narratives – and outside language, as gesture, dress and other symbolic activities. In each case, nations are invoked as discursive moments, and they come into being as results of articulation. Taking off one’s hat may be an expression of respectful obedience, but taking it off while the national anthem is being broadcast during a public spectacle would predominantly signify the articulation of a nationalist sentiment. As nationalisms are produced through practices of articulation, they may encompass any linguistic or extra-linguistic “practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified” as a result of it (Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* 105). If the removal of one’s hat may yet constitute a floating signifier – a “difference that is

not discursively articulated” – it becomes a nationalist practice when it is articulated as a “differential position [...] within discourse” (ibid.) – in our case when the hat was taken off during the national spectacle. Nationalism provides a structured, if not necessarily coherent, frame for meaning and signification, offering myths of origins and destinies, founding fathers and national villains, and they are productive of subjectivities and national rituals.

Nations, the objects of nationalist discourses, are not eternal or essential, even if nationalists like to portray them as such. Most self-conscious nations came into being less than 200 years ago, even though their protagonists often equip them with naturalising discourses, portraying nations as arising from time immemorial and sometimes as a natural part of a person’s being, like “a nose and two ears” (Gellner 6). Eric Hobsbawm refers to the invented character of national traditions, sometimes expressed as “semi-fiction [...] or by forgery” (p. 7). The term *nation* emerged to designate the various student bodies attending medieval universities, where students were lodged according to their place of birth (Kamenka 3). ‘Nation’ is derived from Latin *nationem* “nation, stock, race,” also “that which has been born,” from *nasci* “be born” (Harper 2001).<sup>57</sup> Already the variety of national designations indicates the contingent character of these communities, such as in the case of South Africa, where the place of the nation has emerged through a series of migrations, frontier wars, imperial decisions and struggles over recognition and autonomy. Also, in the case of Norway, the precise boundaries of the national territory have changed, indicating that there is nothing *natural* about the nation, but that it is the result of numerous contingent moments.

Analogies between various nationalist discourses demonstrate that these nations are not as different as they like to portray themselves. National narratives share certain formal

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<sup>57</sup> Patriotism, derived from Latin *patrie*, signifies “love of the fatherland”, and introduces a positive evaluation. As George Bernhard Shaw is reputed to have said, “patriotism is believing your country is better than all the others just because you're born there”. I will discuss patriotism further in the section on South Africa.

attributes, particularly their obsession with myths of origin and foundation, and elevation of founding fathers, and, at least in certain nationalist discourses, designations of national ages.<sup>58</sup>

In the ideology of the dominant formation at the time of the National Party government in South Africa, the land where the first European settlers arrived was uninhabited, and, in its religious articulation, was granted to them by divine ordinance (O'Meara 67-77). The founding fathers of the nation also included the "trekkers", pioneers who ventured into the heartland of today's South Africa, armed with a rifle and a dream, and who, in the face of grave dangers and an unfriendly environment, stood tall and conquered new land. So-called Afrikaner ideology also included a dystopian narrative. After the arrival of British colonists, the nation entered its "heroic age," signified by the South African war of the early twentieth century, followed by its "iron age". The organisations, institutions and other protagonists of Afrikaner nationalism insisted on the restoration of a national "golden age" through the modern medium of the nation state. In Norway, the nationalist movement of the nineteenth century found the origin of the Norwegian language in Old Norse, the language of the Vikings. Their time was constructed as the "golden age" of a nation that had fallen prey to conquest by foreigners. In both cases, nationalist historiography relies on stock elements of nationalist discourse.

Should we then conclude that nationalist historiography is wrong? Hayden White argues that modes of history writing are by nature "poetic" when they give historical events an "explanation" and a "point" or justification. In addition, there are no grounds on which we can finally determine the objective truthfulness of a given historical narrative, since the attribution of "truthfulness" to a historical narrative is a product of the situatedness of the author, and not as a property of the text itself (p. xii).<sup>59</sup> Since *poesis* (Latin, "poetry", from

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<sup>58</sup> The terms "golden", "silver", "bronze", "heroic and "iron" age occur in Hesiod's *Works and Days*.

<sup>59</sup> The question of objective representations and the possibility of language as a mirror of social events is debated in greater detail in chapter 2.

Greek *poesis* “composition, poetry”, from *poein* “to make or compose”), or creativity, is a property of all historical narrative, it would never be possible to arrive finally at a true, unmediated representation of things as they really happened prior to their representation in some language. It does not follow, however, that historical narratives are necessarily *false*, nor that national subjectivities are *a priori* expressions of false consciousness.

### **Social antagonism, language and time**

If the values of French republicanism fail to explain why the new political imagining became national, and if a liberal ideology of opposition to empire is insufficient to explain the form of subjectivities in the New World, it may be necessary to specify further the conditions under which the early nationalisms emerged. Benedict Anderson calls attention to the central antagonism that was productive of nationalist movement in the Americas. Imperial rule entailed that those who arrived latest in the colony would occupy its highest positions, with the Creoles situated below them. The central, organising antagonism, the moment when the presence of another “prevents me from being myself” – when a peasant cannot be a peasant (Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* 125) – was constituted by a moment of newly-arrived imperial subjects having preference to positions in the colony, obstructing or barring Creoles from these positions.

These new subjectivities, construed as national in opposition to imperial, draw on previous subject formations, and, in particular, rearticulate moments of the dynastic realms and religious systems inherited from the empire. While religious systems became imaginable “through the medium of a sacred language and written script” (Anderson, *Imagined Communities* 13), print-capitalism undermined their coherence through its ability to manufacture texts in the vernacular, enabling fragmentation, pluralisation and territorialisation

of the sacred languages. Dynasties, hierarchically organised between a divinely legitimated high centre and a population of subjects, declined with the introduction of the modern idea of sovereignty, which enabled governance “fully, flatly, and evenly operative over each square centimetre of a [...] territory” (Anderson, *Imagined Communities* 19), and had to be self-consciously defended as “monarchy” from 1789.

While print-capitalism enabled national consciousness by facilitating a relatively unified written code below Latin and above the spoken vernaculars, and a rising awareness of boundaries between these new codes, it also enabled a regular output of local (which later became national) news in the colonies. It made possible a sense of simultaneity of world events: while one event took place in Madrid, *something else* was recorded as taking place in Lima. Newspapers created and brought together communities, shaped by a philosophy of enlightenment and liberalism, and produced the possibility of simultaneity in cross-time, but their emergence does not suffice to explain the form taken by the resistance to the imperial centre.

The creole upper class, central to imperial stability, but condemned to second rank because of their place of birth, was instrumental in manufacturing the nations of the New World as a vehicle to improve their career options. After independence, the status of those who arrived altered from “high” to “low”, from imperial subjects to immigrants. These elements together – print-capitalism, the antagonisms of the creole functionaries, and the precursory dynastic and religious systems – produced the new national subjectivities, and made it possible to declare limited and sovereign nations. Nations, then, are imagined, but not invented, limited and sovereign communities (Anderson, *Imagined Communities* 6). Empires were rearticulated as regimes that prevented subjects from being themselves, and, in contrast with the preceding religious systems’ conception of space, nationalism asserted a limited

community: beyond a nation there would always be other nations. Furthermore, the novel community of subjects, the nation, should govern itself, and not be governed from above or outside.


### **Three typologies of nationalism**

If, as Benedict Anderson claims, nationalism should be grouped with kinship and religion, rather than with ideologies such as liberalism and socialism, we may assume that there is more than one type of nationalism, as there are several types of kinships and religions.<sup>60</sup> We will discuss three such typologies in some detail. They are arranged according to linear temporality, and emerge as a product of each theorist's definition of nationalism.

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<sup>60</sup> Ernest Gellner makes the reservation that nationalism is not an inherent attribute, even if has come to appear as such (p. 6).





Eugene Kamenka	Peter Alter	Benedict Anderson
<b>Liberal nationalism</b> Nation as aggregate of individuals-as-citizens participating in common future through shared language and physical proximity (e.g. France).	<b>Risorgimento nationalism</b> Emancipatory, based on national and individual autonomy and equality, fusing social groups (e.g. France, Germany, Italy, Greece).	<b>Creole pioneers</b> Provided model for later nationalisms (e.g. Brazil, Peru, USA; not France because the experience was too short lived).
<b>Organic nationalism</b> Nation as organism with individuals as subordinate parts (e.g. Germany).	<b>Reform nationalism</b> Defence of weak state (e.g. late 19 <sup>th</sup> century Japan).	<b>Official nationalism</b> Introduced from above as a vehicle to legitimate and consolidate the state (e.g. Russia, South Africa).
<b>Fusion nationalism</b> Combined notion of nationalism with social and economic progress (e.g. Mexico).	<b>Integral nationalism</b> Conservative, absolute right-wing radicalism and imperialism (e.g. Germany, Italy, Japan).	<b>Linguistic nationalism</b> Nations as cultural communities, equipped with dictionaries and oral traditions in the vernacular (e.g. Serbia, Norway).
	<b>Anti-colonial nationalism</b> Consolidate state and mobilize and integrate, through linguistic assimilation (e.g. Kenya).	<b>Diasporic nationalism</b> Nation independent of territorial location ("long-distance nationalism", e.g. Croatia, Algeria, China).

Fig. 4: Three models of nationalism

Even if England most clearly qualified as a nation in the eighteenth century – with its parliament, an upper class that saw its own and the national interest as coinciding, and a relatively broad dissemination of a written vernacular – it was the principle of national autonomy, as it was asserted through the French revolution of 1789, that became the lynchpin of nationalism as the “basis for a new political order in Europe” (Kamenka 1976: 8).

According to the new principle, the nation became the fundamental category, serving to define and delimit a sovereign people. In this early formation, the nation was conceived as an aggregate of individuals who could participate as citizens, through a common language, in a common future.

In German nationalism the nation was conceived as an organism with individuals as subordinate parts. Divisions between nations were as fundamental as the distinction between species in the animal kingdom, and these divisions were laid down by “God and Nature” (Kamenka 11). The primary task of German nationalism was not to achieve democratic and popular sovereignty, as it had been in France, but the revival and unity of an already established national spirit. To Kamenka, both liberal and organic types of nationalisms may serve as foundations for political progress. With the advent of the twentieth century, nationalism became necessary for social and economic progress as well. In Kamenka’s opinion it is in Mexico that nationalism finds its first fusion with social and economic progress (p. 17).

In his concept of Risorgimento nationalism, Peter Alter attempts to fuse Kamenka’s liberal and organic types. The Risorgimento movement for unification – a movement that came out of Italy – may be unifying (fusing diverse parts into a nation), as in Italy and Germany, or secessionist (seeking sovereignty in the expense of imperial rule), as in Greece and Finland. It will in either case have an emancipatory effect, and it was productive of a new social stratum, a “new”, or re-invented, self-conscious people. Furthermore, nationalism served to fuse social groups and shape new identities which could, in effect, manufacture a new “liberal ideology of opposition”, and assert autonomy, and national and individual equality (Alter 19). Risorgimento nationalism could form national identities from political, economic, cultural, linguistic or religious elements.

Reform nationalism, in Alter’s view, emerged as a response by some Asian states that proved “inferior in certain economic, technical and military respects when confronted by Western powers” (p. 23), to serve in defence of the ruling stratum’s economic, cultural and political control of the territory. In Japan nationalism served as a vehicle for integration, and

to marginalise opposition to radical social changes. Reform nationalism anticipated central elements in anti-colonial nationalism, which emerged as a state ideology after 1945 in part to consolidate the state and divert attention from domestic problems (Alter 113). To Alter integral nationalism constitutes a particularly malign form of absolutism, in which nationalism serves as a substitute religion, and where there is no recourse to individual rights. Alter associates this form of nationalism with right-wing radicalism in Britain and with imperialism in Italy and Germany.

Benedict Anderson claims instead that nationalism first appeared in the former colonies of the New World, and that, while contingent on the decline of imperial legitimacy and religious systems, it was enabled through the spread of print-capitalism, and a novel conception of simultaneity in cross-time (*Imagined Communities* 24).<sup>61</sup> Nationalism in countries such as Brazil, Peru and the USA serves as the model for a second type or wave, denominated official nationalism. From the mid nineteenth century it was possible to implement nationalism from above, and by making use of the state. In Europe and Asia a number of monarchies made use of nationalism as a vehicle for renewed legitimacy as dynasties could no longer be justified as empowered through divine prescription. Official nationalism constitutes as set of policies available to states where the ruling class felt threatened, such as with Siam and Hungary (Anderson, *Imagined Communities* 110).

The momentum of the nationalist movement is only properly to be found in Europe with its third wave or type, referred to as linguistic nationalism. This kind of nationalism had as its philosophical origin the theories of Herder and Rousseau, asserting that each nation was signified by a separate language and culture, which expressed the nation's "historical genius" (Anderson, "Western nationalism and Eastern nationalism" 40). This movement ushered in

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<sup>61</sup> Anderson borrows the notion of a temporal shift from Walter Benjamin. I will discuss the differences between their implementation of the concept in the concluding section of this chapter.

dictionaries for national languages and the writing-down of oral literary traditions in Greece, Germany, Norway, and, later, Bangladesh. With the advent of television and new information technologies, however, increasing numbers of people are making use of different languages in different contexts, potentially undermining the appeal of linguistic nationalism.

Anderson suggests that a combination of electronic communication and massive migrations of populations may be productive of a new form of nationalism, in which the territorial location of its subjects is of lesser importance. “The internet, electronic banking and cheap international travel [allow] people to have a powerful influence on the politics of their country of origin, even if they have no intention any longer of living there” (Anderson, “Western nationalism and Eastern nationalism” 42). In some cases this kind of long-distance nationalism may serve a largely symbolic significance, where the diasporic subject may perform a nationalism of choice: that of his nation-of-origin, or of his nation-of-residence.

In all these models, nationalism is a contingent historical movement. To Kamenka, nationalism is founded on the idea of individuals as citizens that participate voluntarily in a common future. Alter emphasises the capacity of nationalism to fuse groups at its moment of inception. For Anderson, nationalism was a way of opposing imperial governance. They agree that nations first worked as a liberating force from feudal and imperial governance. After its precursor movements, nationalism could then be introduced by states, rather than through popular organisation. The modern notion of nation building is related to this kind of official nationalism, in that it is now a state that claims custodianship over the national signifier, rather than a national movement claiming a right for sovereignty. Today, nationalism is commonly used to designate far-right movements outside the state. However, Kamenka, Alter and Anderson share their use of the term nationalism to denote a historical epoch that follows after feudal and imperial governance, rather than an extremist political ideology.

While some nationalisms claim that their specific nation has special rights to a mythic homeland from time immemorial, all national movements can trace their origin to some historical movement from the late eighteenth century. Only with nationalism as a modern movement did it become possible to think of two events taking place at the same time in different locations. This simultaneity across time was contingent on a dismantling of imperial centres and a rise of national communities. Nationalism made it possible to conceive of communities that would place creole functionaries at the highest rank. A new conception of time and space, combined with social antagonisms which made it useful to imagine communities that separated the colonies from the imperial centre, produced modern nations: social organisations that were conceived as sovereign, but limited. These characteristics of nations were only possible to imagine from the late eighteenth century, and narratives of nations before that time are part of nations' need to legitimate their existence.

#### **4.1. South Africa: Before and beyond 1994**

Let us now consider more closely the formation of South African nationalism. Print-capitalism was introduced with the British conquest of the territory and its gradual inclusion in the British empire.<sup>62</sup> The Afrikaans-speaking ruling class resisted, most significantly with the declaration of two republics, the Orange Free State and the South African Republic of Transvaal in the 1850s. With the defeat of these republics in the South African war (1899–1902), Britain had taken control of the territory that today is referred to as South Africa, as it was formally recognised with the declaration of the Union of South Africa in 1910. In the

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<sup>62</sup> The history of the media industry is linked to the mining industry, as newspapers were acquired or established through Johannesburg Consolidated Investments, a subsidiary of mining giant Anglo American. Independent Newspapers, the largest newspaper group in South Africa today, was established by Francis Dormer as the Argus Printing Company, with close ties to mining magnate Cecil Rhodes (International Marketing Council of South Africa).

ensuing debate, it was decided that suffrage would continue to be restricted to the white minority of the inhabitants of the South African territory.<sup>63</sup>

Afrikaner nationalism<sup>64</sup> found expression with the *Genootskap van Regte Afrikaner* (Society of True Afrikaners) in 1875, which later morphed into the Afrikaner Bond (1880), and the newspaper *Die Afrikaanse Patriot*, “written in Afrikaans rather than the Dutch currently in standard use” (Worden 88). The society published its first Afrikaans grammars and dictionaries in 1875. With the exodus of Afrikaans-speaking farmers to the cities from the 1870s, a burgeoning articulation of an Afrikaner *volk* as a single group oppressed by “imperialism” found resonance with farmers resenting the dominance of mining and British capital interest in the state. The nation, then, was from the beginning articulated as a community in opposition to the empire, analogously to those creoles assigned the roles of national pioneers of the New World in Benedict Anderson’s model. While nationalism has been considered a universalising movement, including new identities and classes into itself, the Afrikaner ideology seems to fit more closely with Anderson’s observation that nationalisms emerged as an attempt to contain the working class. With the racist constitution of the Union of South Africa, it became possible to articulate class differences along “racial” lines, so that the “black danger” could be seen as a threat to white labour.

The early formation of the National Party was not separatist – it did not seek secession from the Union of South Africa – but organised around white “national” unity, however, the splinter group *Gesuiwerde Nasionale Party* (Purified National Party) emphasised the imperial oppression of an Afrikaner people defined in terms of a common language, culture, race, history and divinely ordained future. The semi-Masonic Afrikaner *Broederbond* (established

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<sup>63</sup> There was important debate among political groups as to the precise criteria for inclusion in the electoral roll, ranging from skin-colour and “ethnic origin” to language and culture.

<sup>64</sup> The term “Afrikaner nationalism” will be used here to signify the articulations of a white, Afrikaans-speaking nation.

in 1918) had called for a set of objective criteria by which the Afrikaner could be identified. In the view of the Potchefstroom academics, each *volk* was to be considered a separate social sphere with a God-willed structure, purpose, calling and destiny (O'Meara 67-77). In this later articulation, then, the Afrikaner nation was conceived of as an organism, where its members were considered subordinate parts of a larger unity, hence as a kind of *organic* nationalism in Kamenka's model.

### ***Apartheid***

With the victory of the Purified Nationalist Party in the 1948 elections, the South African state embarked on a programme of hardening social boundaries along "racial" or "ethnic" lines.<sup>65</sup> Passport laws were toughened, the control of influx to the cities was strengthened, and the Immorality Act banned interracial marriages, among a host of other measures. In the 1950s Sophiatown was dismantled,<sup>66</sup> and it was also in this period that Afrikaans, the language of the National Party's leadership, as well as that of its dominant constituency, gained recognition as an official language on a par with English. In short, the attempt to suture the social by erecting non-permeable boundaries between whites and non-whites was pursued to the full extent of its logic. Cities were to be white, while non-whites were moved into townships and homelands.

Afrikaner nationalism, as it was articulated by the governing National Party, moved from emphasising a fusion of social groups (who spoke the same language) to defending, protecting and implementing white privilege as it had already been established with the Union of South Africa. A new leadership had emerged in the *Broederbond*, consisting of young intellectuals educated in Europe, and with a deep admiration for National Socialism as it

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<sup>65</sup> The categories that became dominant towards the end of the apartheid epoch were "white/European", "coloured", "Indian" and "African". These categories were of course highly problematic, both in their conceptualisation and implementation (Worden 95-96).

<sup>66</sup> Sophiatown's singular location inside a major city and its position as a juncture for encounters across the racial line made it a particularly pregnant signifier, both to those who opposed the laws of segregation and to those in favour.

emerged in Germany. These pilgrims of a nationalism implemented by the state could be classified as integral nationalists in Peter Alter's scheme: a conservative, absolute right-wing radicalism (Alter 26-32). From 1948, Afrikaner nationalism was a tool for nation building, consistent with Anderson's notion of official nationalism, and a vehicle to legitimate and consolidate the state.

The apartheid policies were not implemented without protest. The demonstration that in some ways inaugurated the modern resistance to apartheid was a peaceful protest in 1956 by women burning their passports with the slogans, "With passports we are slaves" and "Women don't want passports". The period also saw the establishment of the PAC, the ANC Youth League, and the Umkhonto we Sizwe, the armed wing of the ANC, led by Nelson Mandela, later convicted for treason in the Rivonia trials. By 1976 the protests were widespread and organised, to some extent, around popular imagery, such as the widely circulated picture of Nelson Mandela behind prison bars. When the state, then, introduced Afrikaans as a compulsory language in schools, riots broke out in the South-Western Townships of Johannesburg (Soweto) and other areas. Schoolchildren refused instruction in what was perceived as the oppressor's language, and took to the streets, marching and singing songs of protest. The state responded with bullets, a scenario that was rendered in *Sarafina*, a movie that was used to garner international support for the anti-apartheid movement, in a similar way to the use of the picture of Mandela). The international community responded with sanctions against the apartheid state.

By the time P.W. Botha took power in 1978, then, it was beyond doubt that the regime was in a serious crisis. It was threatened from both within and without, and the state articulated the juncture as a conspiracy of communists set to wreak havoc.<sup>67</sup> Botha's remedy,

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<sup>67</sup> By this time, the theological justification for white rule was of less importance. Predominantly, the situation was articulated as one of an embattled agent of order against a sea of disorder and chaos.



termed the total strategy, was two-pronged. Domestically, the state would attempt to manufacture and co-opt a “black middle class” (this concept is still prominent in contemporary discourses on South African society), while, as a matter of promotion, it would reformulate a number of oppressive mechanisms to make them appear as more modern mechanisms of governance. Hence, homelands were now increasingly referred to as “nations”, with a degree of political autonomy. Passports controls were eased, while other forms of influx control were intensified. The powers and resources of the secret police grew immensely. Various programmes of more “scientific” population control were investigated, and foreign operations intensified. In short, the total strategy consisted of intensified surveillance, increased powers of detention, and an attempt to appropriate modern discourses of democratic nationalism and free, individual choice as a means to sustain the order. It was, however, not successful.

The 1980s saw an increasing fragmentation within the hegemonic bloc. Business leaders received concessions from the National Party, departing from its traditionally anti-capitalist line, signalling a shift from state intervention in the political economy to an increasing focus on maintaining an orderly social climate for business. The Wiehan report in 1979 recommended easing the long-standing ban on African trade unions in order to prevent wildcat strikes, and the Riekert Commission advised dismantling white job reservation while maintaining a rigorous control on influx to the cities. Compulsory primary education was also introduced, though multiracial schools could only be run privately. Public amenities, such as hotels, restaurants and theatres, were no longer compulsorily segregated. In line with the total strategy, these measures were introduced to “intensify class differentials while reducing racial ones” (Worden 124), or, in a word, to make it possible to preserve entrenched social division within a global discourse of “fair capitalism”. The racist social division inherited from the

Union of South Africa and elaborated through the National Party government from 1948 was rearticulated as a national policy with Botha's total strategy in an attempt to justify and garner support for the regime.

We may codify Afrikaner nationalism in three different ways with Benedict Anderson's model. While there were some parallels between the emergence of an early Afrikaans-speaking republic and the pioneering *creole nationalisms* of the Americas, these experiences were relatively short-lived. The central organising element at this early stage was Afrikaans as signifier of a national ethos, distinct from that expressed in Dutch. With the development of Afrikaans as an autonomous language with dictionaries and grammars, and its expression in newspapers, Afrikaner nationalism appears more similar to those *linguistic nationalisms* Anderson describes as emerging with the advent of national romanticism in Europe. Finally, with the appropriation of the state in 1948, the National Party also implemented nationalism from above, making the South African experience similar to Anderson's *official nationalism*.

If the official discourse on nations and races was an attempt to naturalise divisions already entrenched in the 1910 Union of South Africa, it was also a case of defending the privilege of the upper classes and the "innate, inherited superiority" of colonial rulers (Anderson, *Imagined Communities* 150). Official nationalism appealed to "white solidarity" as a response to challenges from subordinate groups within the dominant classes. While nations are conceptualised in language and as historical destinies, and can be naturalised, racism is conceived in blood and as "eternal contaminations" (Anderson, *Imagined Communities* 149). If we consider the political formation of official South Africa after 1910, including the apartheid regime from 1948, as a defence of racial privilege, perhaps racism is less of a derivation from nationalism than a response to it.<sup>68</sup> With the foundation of the

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<sup>68</sup> Against Tom Nairn's contention that racism is a derived form of nationalism, Benedict Anderson asserts

African People's Organisation, the forerunner to the ANC, in 1902, and widespread strikes and rebellions, racist policies were implemented in an attempt to split subordinate groups by appealing to racial rather than national solidarity.

With the failure of the tricameral constitution – which had institutionalised the colour barrier as three Houses of Parliament in 1984 – and intensified sanctions from the international community, F.W. de Klerk became the custodian of the dismantling of the apartheid state. By the time the multiracial Mass Democratic Movement launched its civil disobedience campaign (the first sign of a major movement against the regime that included large numbers of those who had benefited from it), the National Party was already busy repealing some of its most unpopular measures, such as the banning of the ANC and PAC, the imprisonment of Nelson Mandela and the colonisation of Namibia. In 1991, the Group Areas, the Land and Population Registration Acts were repealed, and the CODESA negotiations instituted. After South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994, Nelson Mandela and the ANC took over as custodians of the South African state.

## **Beyond 1994**

We may now ask in what manner 1994 entails a break in South Africa's history and a shift in the signifying practices of the state. Anderson explains the South African social formation prior to 1994 by reference to racism. He makes a distinction between nationalism and racism, and argues that racism and anti-Semitism are not derived from nationalism (Anderson, *Imagined Communities* 148). While nationalist discourses were, as products of print-capitalism, conceived in language, and thought in terms of historical destinies, "racism

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that racism should be considered in a separate categories, since its primary purpose is not to justify foreign wars but domestic repression. The new labels attached to the social divisions under Botha, rearticulating racial homelands as "autonomous nations", could imply that as a measure to garner domestic and international support for the regime's strategy of domination it was necessary to articulate the opponent as foreign.

dreams of eternal contaminations, transmitted from the origins of time through an endless sequence of loathsome copulations” (Anderson, *Imagined Communities* 149). Subsequently, it was possible for the apartheid state, while engaging in racist practices domestically, to venture into “amicable relations (however discreetly handled) with prominent black politicians in certain African states” (Anderson, *Imagined Communities* 150 n.19). When homeland policies were resignified as national – making foreigners of those who had been targets of racist discrimination within “white” South Africa – practices that had been considered racist were now reinscribed as a property of the nation, rather than as an appendix to nationalism, since the total strategy constituted an attempt to make national and “racial” borders coincide. With the nationalisation of homelands, it became possible to claim that discrimination that had been based on “race” or colour was now a product of national difference. As P.W. Botha’s total strategy served to reinscribe racist policies as national difference, the South African state was already heading for a deinstitutionalisation of racism before 1994. In this analysis, 1994 would thus primarily signify a final end to official legitimisation of racism as an element of governance, while the South African state could continue its existence relatively undisturbed.

The difficulty with this kind of analysis of the South African social formation is its strong implications of a suture of the social.<sup>69</sup> It is as if current dispossessions of land, for example, are issues wholly unrelated to structures put in place by past policies,<sup>70</sup> or violent

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<sup>69</sup> Laclau and Mouffe illustrate the impossibility of suture in a passage which considers the State's role and function in society: “In general, [...] attempts to explain the 'relative autonomy of the State' were made in a framework that accepted the assumption of a sutured society - for example, through determination in the last instance by the economy - and so the problem of relative autonomy, be it of the State or any other entity, became insoluble. For, either the structural framework constituted by the basic determinations of society explains not only the limits of autonomy but also the nature of the autonomous entity - in which case that entity is another structural determination of the system and the concept of 'autonomy' is redundant; or else the autonomous entity is not determined by the system, in which case it is necessary to explain where it is constituted, and the premise of a sutured society would also have to be discarded.” (Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* 139-140).

<sup>70</sup> The incident at Kempton Park, where PAC-affiliated officials “sold” plots to squatters, serve to demonstrate that the phenomenon of squatting has not gone away, and that it continues to be conceived as a problem, the essence of which is the point of contention between the parties (ANC and PAC) and their imagined electorate (Randall and Sapa).

attacks by whites on transgressors of the colour-line should be explained without reference to its past institutionalisation.<sup>71</sup> What is at stake here is to understand the antagonisms in the present as structured, if not subsumed, by relations of the past, or as a shift from an identity politics dominated by popular struggles to a realignment of the social in terms of democratic struggles (Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* 137).<sup>72</sup> The strong sense of historical continuity suggested by Anderson's analysis of South African nationalism is founded on a view of apartheid policies as racist practices prior to their reinscription as national policies with the total strategy. In order to understand the post-1994 South African social formation, we need to include in our analysis the resignification of racist barriers as national with the total strategy.

The question is how to deal with the past, and, in our case, a national past. It is a matter of realigning the social in terms of difference rather than antagonism, since the territory which is charted as a property of the South African nation continues to inhabit people with pasts both in support of and engaged in resistance to the previous, and, to a lesser extent, the current regime. But it is also a matter of establishing a juncture beyond which antagonisms of the past can be relinquished, since, if no clear break with the types of violent practices associated with apartheid can be agreed upon, it will ultimately be impossible to establish some position non- or post apartheid.

The end of apartheid in South Africa can be seen as an element in a chain of signifiers constituted around relatively concentrated systems, or moments, of mass oppression of groups

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<sup>71</sup> In July 2001, Wanda Stoffberg was attacked by two white men as a consequence of running a butcher's shop in a predominantly white section of George, South Africa, that attracted black customers. Her neighbours demanded the shop be closed, but she resisted. One night she was attacked outside her smallholding: "At the gate of her smallholding, two men attacked her from behind, hitting, kicking and throttling her. Then one of them, who she saw from his hand was a white man, carved a "K" into her left breast. He told her: 'This is a message from our boss,' and then said that 'kaffirboeties' were not permitted to stay in George." (Sapa 2001).

<sup>72</sup> Such a view forms the basis of Aletta J. Norval's argument concerning the politics of cultural recognition in contemporary South Africa, where she argues for an "aspectival, rather than essentialist, form of identity – a view of identity which recognizes its own unsutured nature" (p. 105).

perceived as the dominant regime's other.<sup>73</sup> In each case, the sheer numbers of people entangled in these systems have made it possible to single them out, like the holocaust, the early modern slave trade, and, in our case, apartheid. Each of them comes with highly circumscribed regulations of rights to speak, such as sets of taboos, normative evaluations of speakers', and often also listeners', moral attributes, and so forth. The density of regulations around these signifiers suggests that they embody something unspeakable for those who inhabit the discourse, although possibly more so for those who are produced as dominant in the historical system. It could be argued that it is the inability to think post-apartheid that prevents a putting-to-rest of the issue, and thus continues to structure social relations. However, if we accept that holocaust and apartheid are similar signifiers, the situation is in some ways analogous to that which faced Europe after 1945.<sup>74</sup>

After National Socialism in Germany, one could argue, "the memories of the survivors" and their descendants were irreconcilable with those of the "descendants of the collective of perpetrators", thus inhibiting "one coherent image of history" (Weigel 167). Also, one would be faced with

The simultaneity of the rationality with which the annihilation was perpetrated, on the one side, and the irrationality and incomprehensibility of the motives and justifications given for it, on the other. (Weigel 167)

The notion of "speaking after Auschwitz", then, might lend some analogous insight to a

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<sup>73</sup> It may be argued that apartheid was more than a system of signification. As Paul Bowman shows, this is a key point of contention between Laclau and Mouffe's style of discourse analysis and the disciplinary approach taken by e.g. John Mowitt. While the former hold that there is no anchorage outside discourse – i.e., that the discursive is co-extensive with the social – Mowitt claims that discourse can only be anchored in disciplinarity, as it is an academic form of knowing, in his view (Bowman 66-71).

<sup>74</sup> Jacques Derrida makes the point that "the judicial simulacrum and the political theater of this state racism have no meaning and would have had no chance outside a European 'discourse' on the concept of race. That discourse belongs to a whole system of 'phantasms,' to a certain representation of nature, life, history, religion, and law, to the very culture which succeeded in giving rise to this state takeover." ("Racism's last word" 294). Here the signification is geographically located as a specifically European "discourse", another potential candidate as the other of the current dispensation.

problematic of speaking after apartheid. What is at stake is to come to terms with the past in terms of what Walter Benjamin referred to as Messianic time, rather than his notion of the homogeneous, empty time characteristic of nationalism in Anderson's model. Messianic time asks us to deal with the past in some absolute sense, and appears to impel us to relegate South Africa prior to 1994 to some pre-nationalist past. Do historical events such as the holocaust, the early modern slave trade, and apartheid entail this sort of radical break in our conception of time?

When Benjamin penned his "Theses on the Philosophy of History" in April 1940, his country of birth, Germany, was on the brink of war with his country of residence, France.<sup>75</sup> To Benjamin, however, this was not so much a war of two countries or nations, but a dispute over irreconcilable political differences, the consequence and culmination of which was what we today refer to as the Second World War. To Benjamin, the conflict may have appeared as the final moment of a certain historical development – the endpoint of a social logic which might be cruelly and dramatically overturned only at a massive social and material cost.

Benjamin distinguished between universal histories, characterised by homogenous, empty time, and a history writing that aimed to understand Messianic time. Benjamin considered a total, universal history impossible, since "only for a redeemed mankind has its past become citable in all its moments" ("Theses on the philosophy of history" 246). Such a moment would entail the culmination of history itself, the endpoint in which all prior events are illuminated. That day can only be postponed, since its arrival would involve the termination of difference, and a complete suture of the social. While, in retrospect, it may appear as if Benjamin was writing at precisely such a point of finality, his "Theses on the Philosophy of History" indicate that, rather, even at such a moment, densely shot through with

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<sup>75</sup> Benjamin died five months later, after the group of refugees with whom he was attempting to escape France were denied entry to Spain (Arendt 23-24).

images of finality and endpoints, history remains ruptured and non-sutured. It is not history that is considered homogeneous and empty, but universalising narratives that produce historical time as homogeneous. According to Benjamin, homogeneous, empty time is a construct of historiographers, who, busy writing universal histories, fill their historical narrative with facts, assembled in a linear progress narrative.

Is 1994 such a messianic moment in South African history? It would be a mistake to consider the year of South Africa's first parliamentary elections under general suffrage as a moment of democratic redemption, of sorts, in the history of the country. Assuming that the kind of practices that we associate with apartheid are wholly relegated to the past enables the type of "current amazement that the things we are experiencing are 'still' possible", and this amazement "is *not* philosophical" (Benjamin, "Theses on the philosophy of history" 249). By allowing the present to be defined as a state of emergency it performs as the rule of which fascism becomes a normal expression. "One reason why Fascism has a chance is that in the name of progress its opponents treat it as a historical norm," Benjamin notes ("Theses on the philosophy of history" 249). We may need to continue working with two different notions of time: homogeneous, empty time, as the dominant form of historiography, would perceive fascism as an aberrant form of politics, and underwrite the normality of the hegemonic formation as a consequence, while messianic time seeks to find a moment in which such political practices can be eschewed.

Does the recent violence against foreigners in South Africa testify to a successful transition to a post-apartheid dispensation? While social antagonisms before 1994 were structured around white privilege, the recent events were directed against those outside the new nation. However, Pallo Jordan, South African Minister of Arts and Culture, connects the attack on foreign nationals to the horrors of the country's past. "We come from a deeply



fractured and violent past. Given that historical experience, all of us have to do all we can to rid South African society of the anguish, the pain and the degradation of the past.” (Sapa, “Jordan launches campaign”). The new South Africa must seek to engender “a sense of unity, a feeling that we are one nation, diverse though we may be in terms of race, colour, creed, class, gender or social standing” (ibid.), and it is through feelings of belonging and solidarity with fellow nationals that Jordan hopes to alleviate fear and violence against outsiders. The current South African regime seems to recognise precisely the continuity of violence in its history, and the difficulty associated with establishing a moment in which the past can be wholly transcended.

Nations provide our lives with a source of meaning that may have been lost with the withering away of the great religious systems. They dress up in epic clothing, tell stories of themselves as if they hark back to time immemorial, and give promises of a limitless future. We will now proceed to investigate how such stories have become part of the way we perceive ourselves and our place in the world: how sports are vehicles to embed nations as naturalised dispositions to perceive, think and act in our bodies. This is what we refer to as the national-sports nexus.

## II The body of sport

This section consists of three parts, all of which are concerned with the production of a body that is specifically national. Chapter 5 shows how the body is narrated as an element in the epic genre, and this narrative framing of the body was “intended to produce manly virtues in future leaders”, as Bourdieu shows (“Sports fan” 343). I then discuss the different kinds of bodies produced through cognitivism and as a moment in discourse, arguing that both sex and gender are discursively produced.<sup>76</sup> Chapter 5.1 shows how the 1998 World Cup framed the sports event as an epic on the South African national broadcaster. It also demonstrates the contingent, contested character of meaning: questions of cultural autonomy, as well as debates over boundaries of gender and “race” are played out on the television screen. This demonstrates that multiple meanings can be made from the events, and that any given meaning is not produced by the event by itself. Again, Benedict Anderson’s question of national time is raised: while Anderson claims that nationalism ushers in a new, homogeneous and empty time, the 1998 World Cup event on television sought to establish this moment as a clear rupture with the past – a Messianic moment of the type Anderson claims were put to rest with the emergence of nationalism.<sup>77</sup> Chapter 6 discusses how a set of values are located as naturalised beliefs in the body as a result of sports practices in schools and mass disseminated sports mediations, and asks if a new “natural” and “authentic” body, domesticated by what Bourdieu referred to as the “macrobiotic cult of health” (*Distinction* 220) is emerging in place of the hitherto epic body of nationalism. This new body would enable a more autonomous cultural field of sport, since it no longer places nations in a necessarily antagonistic relation to each other.

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<sup>76</sup> See also comments regarding the relation between an analytic, social and performative approach to representations or performance of identities applied to the referee in football in chapter 3.2.

<sup>77</sup> This is discussed further in chapter 4.1 above.

## 5. *The epic body*

What kind of gender order is proposed by the epic form of spectacular sports? This is the central question of this chapter. After discussing a critique of cognitivism and its atomistic conception of the body, we ask how sexual difference and masculinities are produced in sport. How does an epic that suggests a sporting order based on singular individuals organised in hierarchies stand against novelising strategies, such as satire and laughter?

The etymology of the word sport (from Middle English, to divert, disport, short for *disporten*) testifies to a past in which these activities were the domain of the leisured classes. Engaging in sport would be tantamount to wasting one's time, which would require that one had time to waste in the first place, to engage in activities that served no useful purpose, or, to put it differently, to get involved in activities that had no use outside their own purpose. However, by the time vulgar games were codified, rationalised, and made part of the standard education for the sons of the heads of industry as part and parcel of a well-rounded gentleman's education, sport had to make itself useful. The use of vast spaces to pursue sports such as cricket or football in public schools served as a reminder of the economic and social difference between their participants and those who remained outside the playing fields. The haute bourgeoisie, who populated these games, wanted to make sport every bit as useful as rest of a schoolboy's activity, and the purpose of a sport such as football, or football played by Association rules, was reinvented as an undertaking to produce erect and upright bodies and instill gentlemanly values in its participants. In return, football gained the reputation of being a grand and noble pursuit, with the capacity of manufacturing useful and productive bodies with the kinds of values that would be beneficial to young men with social ambitions.

This chapter is concerned with the uses of football to social order, and how the game is used to inscribe dominant values and codes into the bodies of its contestants. We ask how the

body and the categories we ascribe to it is a product of contingent values and codes that are contested and subject to change, and, hence, transmutable. The experience of the body itself, then, changes with the matrix that is imposed upon it and the notions and values that are brought to bear on the concept. Sports tend to conjure a body that is individual and dimorphic. Football bodies are classified in accordance with a binary system of sex differentiation, which is supplemented by a semiotic system that divides the two sexes along lines of gender, or culturally manufactured patterns of appearance and behaviour. This system of classification and perception is productive of the kind of dimorphic system of sexed sport that prevails in elite and mass versions of football, and the gendered expectations that attach to these categories. Is the body also a site to articulate subordinate sex codes, and how may sports be used to transmit and disseminate such codes and practices of the body?

The question of whether football should or may be perceived as a narrative has been a matter of some debate. Elias and Dunning emphasise the sport's ability to arouse pity and fear in its audience, comparing the game to the Aristotelian tragedy (pp. 48-49).<sup>78</sup> However, the comic and its never-ending shifts in positions and ranking could also provide a possible frame into which sporting contests could be fitted. Whannel finds that "the sporting contest itself, while not a narrative, has a structure homologous to that of narrative form. Specifically, all sport contests, like narratives, pose an enigma (who will win) and offer a resolution." (p. 54). Perhaps narratives should not be considered as much a part of the game itself as an aspect of the experience of sport and as a way of making sense of football. Football may be perceived as a kind of narrative that tells stories of bodies by ordering them into a dominantly dichotomous taxonomy of sex with attendant gender roles and appearances. As part of a larger discourse on the body football offers a field of practice and a narrative in which bodies may

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<sup>78</sup> See also chapter 6 and 8 for further discussions of the use of Aristotle's concept of the tragedy in relation to sport.

be shaped and classified according to schemes of perception and valuation. As Caudwell notes, it is “through articulation and materialization – that is, the formulation of body discourse – [that] the ‘viable’ footballing subject is ‘hailed’ into social existence” (p. 380). Silvennoinen points out that the grand narratives of sport propose moral stories aimed at boys by offering “an image of manhood to aspire to” (p. 2). In its dominant form football contributes to sport’s “grandiose and pompous surface” (ibid.), and as mass spectacle it seems appropriate to count football among the grand, epic narratives that aspire to associate sport with the grand and noble pursuits of the social élite.

### **The epic body**

The epic’s close historical entanglement with the emergence of nationalist narratives has made it an appropriate form for major sporting events and common denominator for participants and stakeholders in these events. As Bakhtin notes, the epic marks the precise moment of the king’s withdrawal and the inauguration of a bourgeois national tradition. While the king is now absent and inaccessible to rethinking, his locus or position replaced by stories that situate listeners as children, or descendants of an epic past beyond human activity, and demand their piety. The past to which the epic refers is “walled off from all subsequent times by an impenetrable boundary, [and] is preserved and revealed only in the form of national tradition” (p. 16). Since the epic is a closed narrative, establishing an absolute separation between the past and the present, narrators can have no access to the source of national tradition, and the characters that populate the story can have no influence on the narrative.

The absolute past is a specifically evaluating (hierarchical) category. In the epic world view, ‘beginning,’ ‘first,’ ‘founder,’ ‘ancestor,’ ‘that which occurred earlier’ and so forth are not merely temporal categories but valorized temporal categories, and valorized to an extreme degree. [...] In the

past, everything is good: all the really good things (i.e., the ‘first’ things) occur only in this past. The epic absolute past is the single source and beginning of everything good for all later times as well. (Bakhtin 15)

The epic is a world of firsts and bests, of beginnings and peak times in a national history (ibid. 13), and it is this kind of national tradition that spectacular sports seek to recreate and retell on a global level by producing ready-made and unchanging heroic figures.

The epic past is an imagined precursor of a national present, and features heroes and villains in fixed, unchangeable roles. It is a monolithic and grandiose narrative that lends large symbolic capital to its operator, and one can imagine its alteration to feature a corporate or organisational past in the place of a national tradition. It values hierarchical ordering, and the allotment of set, particular elements according to a dichotomous ranking. Hence, the laughable, low or debased body is excluded from the epic, while the upright, serious and pure is valorised to an extreme degree. The kind of recreation of an imagined past that occurs through the narrative frame of the epic indicates that spectacular sport entails particular perceptions and valuations of bodies, and that these categories tend to produce the kinds of bodies that are evaluated by the narrative form.

The current epic body of sport has at least three distinct sources. First, the organisation of sport with the purpose of national defence indicates that the sporting body had its precise analogy in soldiering. If soldiers under the king’s regime were ideal images of “a bodily rhetoric of honour” the modern soldier was a machine constructed “out of a formless clay”: “a calculated constraint runs slowly through each part of the body, mastering it, making it pliable, ready at all times, turning silently into the automatism of habit” (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 135). Man-the-machine was manufactured as a body that could be analysed and manipulated, subjected, used, transformed and improved so as to produce a certain “way of being, a habitual state (especially of the body) and, in particular, a predisposition, tendency,

propensity or inclination” to act (Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* 214). The kind of dispositions required by a game such as football are acquired through practice, and inscribed into actors’ body-relations. These propensities for action are not independent of the larger economy, since the players’ actual practices must negotiate between the larger field and actors’ interests and values. Hence, the field of military activity produced a set of principles by which football could be organised and conceptualised, and the pliability of the body and rigorous training of dispositions gestated in the military field could be reproduced in the field of sport, making the modern athlete the apotheosis of soldiering, and a model for warfare as a masculine form of culture. As Whannel points out, the modern athlete appears as a “fusion of machine and flesh, or flesh made invincible, [and] represent in almost parodic form the desire to transform the male body into a muscular invulnerability” (p. 69). The invincible and inerrant epic hero stands as the epitome of this kind of masculine warrior fantasy.

Second, the epic as custodian of a national tradition emerges precisely when the king abandons his position as purveyor of and embodiment of the law, leaving the stage open for the emerging industrial bourgeoisie. This change in hegemony involves an alteration in the very conception of the body. In the classical age a violation of the law was considered a transgression against the body of the king, since the law was an extension of the emperor’s will. Proper punishment should therefore be meted against the body of the perpetrator in such a way that there would be no doubt about the supreme power of the king (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 46). In this sense the king’s body encompassed the law and the state apparatus, as well as all the bodies of those who inhabited his realm and were included in his governance. The national body that emerges in the nineteenth century presupposes a polis of citizens with purportedly relatively equal rights before the law. Since access to leisure time became a hallmark of membership in the emerging hegemonic class, the ability to participate in games

such as sport was associated with the values of the new bourgeoisie. Modern sport's association with the grand and noble and its ongoing traffic with the gentlemanly ideals of "fair play" and rôle distance serves as a further link with the epic, locating the values of the nineteenth-century haute bourgeoisie in the place of a king who has now withdrawn and made himself unavailable for further rethinking and consideration. The disinterested, and supposedly apolitical, character of sport as a leisured activity of amateurs and the kind of physical art-for-art's sake undertaken at English public schools at the end of the nineteenth century is indicative of a view of the body where sport has the purpose of training the body when the school boys' minds are at rest. It was precisely through an automatism of habit, or an inculcation of dispositions – a propensity to act without consideration – , that a sport such as football was intended to produce manly virtues in future leaders (Bourdieu, "Sports fan" 343). The predominant political philosophy of football remains intimately linked to the moral ideas of the dominant fractions of the dominant class and a theory of amateurism. Modern sport's inclination to perceive its nineteenth-century amateur practitioners as the ideal competitors of the sport indicates a kind of nostalgic view of the game typical of the epic's propensity to cherish an absolutely valorised past.

Third, on its return as spectacle for the masses, sport is heavily imbued with the quantifiable, measurable and calculable body, and the body of the performer is no longer considered part of a social body with the king as its apex, but, in the language of biology, imagined as an individual and autonomous member of a human species, which is to say as a component part of a scientific body. As Foucault notes, man-the-machine is "both a materialist reduction of the soul and a general theory of dressage, at the centre of which reigns the notion of 'docility', which joins the analysable body with the manipulable body" (*Discipline and Punish* 136). The ready-made and pure hero of the epic is able to convey the



new morality of health, with the purpose of shaping the public's bodies and minds. The narrative context of the epic, locating its listeners as children or descendants of a closed and purportedly unassailable national tradition, makes it particularly suited for a monoglossic and uniform dissemination of dominant values. The epic, as a grand narrative of sport, proposes and prescribes a certain body regime, a dualistic conception of the performer, a binary codification of sex, and a dimorphic gender regime.

These three sources – the automatised military dispositions, the dissemination of values associated with the rising bourgeoisie, and the mass production of dimorphic, autonomous and healthy individuals – form the basis for football as epic. The epic body is the body of officialising sport discourse. Officialising strategies have the purpose of “transmut[ing] ‘egoistic’, private, particular interests (notions definable only within the relationship between a social unit and the encompassing social unit at a higher level) into disinterested, collective, publicly avowable, legitimate interests” (Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* 40), which, in the case of football produced as spectacles for the masses, encompass values and dispositions of soldiery inherited from the inception of organised sport, values of rôle distance and disinterested amateurism produced by football's phase of appropriation by the social élite, and the values of public health discourse with its interest in manufacturing healthy and pure bodies. The interest in purity is an object that public health shares with the generic epic hero. The body of official sport discourse mass-produces a body that up until that point had been of private, particular interest. The values that are inscribed into this dimorphic body – rôle distance, amateurism, purity and authenticity – serve to officialise those values that hitherto had been the exclusive domain of a social elite.

Even if the epic body of football plays the game with its socks rolled up, it does not necessarily compete under the FIFA flag, since a single organisation cannot hold ownership

over the game. The ready-made epic hero of modern football is trained in accordance with an individualising training machine, which produces the paradox that while generically mass-produced, each particular epic body is considered uniquely individual. As Silvennoinen points out, “modern sports and sport performances” may be compared to “merchandise placed on supermarket shelves”, since they “can be recognized and looked at as something familiar and pre-packaged” (p. 4). In order to ensure that the merchandise is not corrupted, and that it contains the appropriate combination of values for public consumption, athletes are codified as authentically natural, in accordance with a discourse that overlooks that “nature, rather than being some pure origin, is already a technology” (Schildrick 158).

### **Cognitivism and discourse**

If the dominant imagination of the sporting body considers it as a natural entity that is being trained, or encultured, into an increasingly machine-like ability to perform, the notion of nature as a technology suggests that the body is already an artifact of culture, before it is exposed to the atomistic, individualising training-machine of modern sport. The atomistic conception of bodies’ claim to provide the sole, objective description of how “human beings process information” (Moe 164), including information about human beings themselves, may itself be a product of the truth regime in which the modern athlete is lodged. If the cognitivist approach to sport perceives “isolated occurrent entities to which we attach isolated function predicates” (ibid.), it organises the world around subjects and their predicates, rather than practices, and even if it may have been productive of the modern athlete, it is contingent, and it fails to resolve the question of how an element, such as a rock, may become a statue, book rest, missile, or talisman, depending on the discourse in which it is embedded, and how a football becomes meaningful only after the player has “processed the

different bits of matter that constitute [...] the ball”, i.e. embedded it into the discourse of football (ibid.).<sup>79</sup>

As a discursive juncture the body of sport appears as a site of articulation, and should be considered as a contingent locus for expression. The individual product of the modern athletic training machine is a possible, even if not necessary, outcome of discursive articulation, or joining together of conditional discourse formations. If articulations are “any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of articulatory practice” (Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* 105), the body appears as an instance in the totality of elements available for articulatory practice, and the very notion of “my body” is in itself the result of contingent articulation, since the body of the king encompassed those of his subjects in the pre-modern era, and the social body, or the body of sports, may be considered as a body that is articulated across or transverse to the bodies of individual performers. The language of the body should be considered as much a form of communication that is prior to symbolic articulation as it is contingent upon a discourse in which it may be articulated, and, hence, dependent on symbolic expression. Finally, there may be strict limitations to the autonomy of “my body” since such a concept depends both on the articulation of the body as something that belongs to me, as well as a discourse that enables the delimitation of individual bodies, such as the discourse of cognitivism.

If the autonomous body of modern sport science emerged as an attempt to fill the black box, or “the void between input and output” left by behaviourism, by the same token it proposed and launched into practice a model of the human performer controlled by the brain, located analogously to the central processing unit of a computer devise, which was left in

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<sup>79</sup> Elements can have no meaning outside or before practice since no object can be given outside every discourse of emergence (Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* 107). See also the discussion of discourse in chapter 3.

charge of a range of input and output units across the body of the athlete (Moe 157-159). By programming the brain one can programme the performer, improve or alter performance or behaviour, which is to say that the brain is the executive of the organism, under which all other parts are subordinate (Moe 160). This kind of hierarchical, teleological view of nature, human beings, and the way humans and their environment interact, writes cognitivism into the anatomico-metaphysical register of man-the-machine which Foucault proposes was launched by Descartes (*Discipline and Punish* 136): It is because I think that I am.

To cognitivism it is the brain that is the location of knowledge to the human organism, and it is because humans are comparable to computers that they are worthy of interest to the scientist. As Gardner suggests, “if a man-made machine can be said to reason, have goals, revise its behavior, transform information, and the like, human beings certainly deserve to be characterized in the same way” (quoted in Moe 159). The elevation of the human being to the level of computers may appear tautological, since it may be that humans were necessary in order for both the computer and the language in which it is described to exist, or, to put it differently, neither the computer nor the language with which to describe it could have been given outside every discourse of emergence. On the one hand, this raises the question of the kinds of knowledges located in the body, but which are not fully articulated or present to the performer. These may be knowledges referred to as “acephalic”, prior to the subject, or located in a body minus head and heart (Žižek, “Desire”). On the other hand, cognitivism fails to raise the question of how bodies relate, and how knowledges are interchanged between performers. Is it enough to reprogramme or rewire a brain to alter behaviour? Is not the notion of a performer ever exercising alone a mythological creature?

Sport science’s concern with how to produce athletes that perform correctly and proficiently has produced a doxa according to which a training of the performer’s body

commences with an exercise of his or her mind. By disciplining performers' bodies in accordance with an individualising training machine, cognitivism has assumed that "athletes are carrying out rule-governed or program-based (i.e., motor program) information processing" in the same way as computers process pieces of program code segment by segment (Moe 177). However, this approach "produces an incomplete or erroneous understanding of intentional movements in sport" (ibid.), since

our being is so intertwined with the world that it cannot be understood in the detached subject-object epistemology that we have inherited from the Cartesian tradition. Contrary to the Cartesian stance, "we are," as Dreyfus says, "at home in the world and can find our way about in it because it is *our* world produced by us as the context of our pragmatic activity" (ibid. 172),

which is to say that our world is discursively produced, and a result of contingent discursive articulation. In order to explain the sense of having acquired the ability to "perform automatically" (ibid. 171) after a prolonged period of practice, it is not necessary to claim that the brain has been rewired or reprogrammed. A concept such as Bourdieu's dispositions would suffice, since the claim could be made that the performer has now acquired the inclination for practice necessary to participate in a field and be recognised by those who operate it.

If the body of cognitivism attempts to programme performers according to an individualising, atomistic training machine, the body as phenomenon asks how does this body appear, and how does it appear to me. How does this body communicate? What are the symptoms of this body and what and how may they mean? In other words, a phenomenological or discursive perspective raises the question of how this body can be meaningful. The body emerges as a site or location for performance or articulation of sex and/or gender, and such articulations may be considered as investments from a range of

actors, investors, and stakeholders in a body that encompasses institutions, subjects, objects, strategies, and narratives. The body as a site for meaningful experience “is not only an experience of my body, but an experience of my body-in-the-world”,<sup>80</sup> or a juncture for discursive articulations of the body with objects in the world, which is always contingent, shifting and relational.

### **Discursive production of biological sex**

If no objects are given before any discursive articulation, it follows that a construct such as the human body does not already exist before language or discourse, but that it is produced and constituted in and through discursive practice. Caudwell points out that “the body does not exist as a biological entity; instead the body is produced and controlled through a series of regulatory practices” (p. 375). The notion of the body as a discursive articulation enables “a move beyond the idea that sex is ‘natural’ and pregiven” (ibid. 371), since the binary division of man and woman is constituted in and through linguistic practice. Justification of sexed dimorphism by reference to, say, chromosomal set-up cannot suffice to “reclaim a ‘natural’ body untainted by its discursive constitution – for such a body has no existence,” and can be refuted by reference to the constructed character of such concepts, and by pointing out that “all meanings, whatever their source, are contestable and open to continual reinscription” (Schildrick 151).

The dominant sexual dimorphism of bodily representations in sport divides bodies into two – exhaustive, non-overlapping and mutually exclusive of sex –by imposing binary sexual categories that are alleged to be neutral, objective descriptions of bodies. Games are divided into sexed categories of play when they are turned into sports. “When *sähly* was thrust through the ‘sports machine,’ it turned into salibandy (‘floorball’), no longer played in mixed

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<sup>80</sup> Moe 174, quoting M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. C. Smith, London: Routledge, 1962: 141.

teams but with men and women in separate ones” (Silvennoinen 5). These binary representations are supposedly natural or prior to language, even if these categories are constructed in language and preserved through linguistic and other forms of discursive practices, which is to say that the dominant dimorphic sexual categories of sport are socially constructed. If nature is a discursively produced concept, categories of nature are always already coded with cultural values and there can be no neutral, objective, or pre-linguistic categories into which bodies may be put. The sexual binary of sport, as an extract of the range of possible combinations of sexual manifestations, writes itself into the series of dualisms that

have been persistent in Western traditions; they have all been systemic to the logics and practices of domination of women, people of colour, nature, workers, animals – in short, domination of all constituted as others, whose task is to mirror the self. Chief among these troubling dualisms are self/other, mind/body, culture/nature, male/female, civilized/primitive, reality/appearance, whole/part, agent/resource, maker/ made, active/passive, right/wrong, truth/illusion, total/partial, God/man. The self is the One who is not dominated, who knows that by the semice of the other, the other is the one who holds the future, who knows that by the experience of domination, which gives the lie to the autonomy of the self. To be One is to be autonomous, to be powerful, to be God. (Haraway 177)

The designation of bodies into these categories, and the perpetuation of such a binary system to classify athletes is “tautological [as] there will never be a true sign of a true sex, whatever the hopes of the IOC” (Hood-Williams 290). If the category of male in this dimorphic system is associated with activity, culture, fatherhood and reason, the female category is thought as connected to passivity, nature, motherhood, and emotions. It is in such a system of domination that female may be perceived as a position in relation to the dominant, or as that which is marginal or marginalised, rather than a fixed or essential category that is given prior to discourse.

The male and female sexual categories are less than stable or fixed, and the very

instability of this dimorphic system opens the possibility of rematerialisation and rearticulations of bodies as sexed phenomena. “Bodies never quite comply with the norms by which their materialization is impelled” (Butler 2). As Caudwell shows, “most sport is premised on dimorphic sex and the notion that sex difference is ‘natural,’ stable, and fixed. It is this acceptance of sex as pre-given and pre-discursive that continues to uphold the notion of the sex/gender distinction” (p. 384). However, even if sex is “regulated and formulated in order to propel a system that operates to legitimate, and exclude, particular sporting bodies,” the very possibility of transgressing the dominant sexual order serves to enable practices that rearticulate sporting bodies. Some football players “successfully disobey the sex-gender-desire rules and resist the idea of sexual differentiation. They offer bodies that refuse to comply, and it is in these moments of mistaken sex identity that the sexed body is rearticulated” (ibid.). It is perhaps in relation to those bodies that transgress the dominant order of sexual categorisation that the dimorphic system asserts itself most forcefully, such as when the dominant order of sport reestablishes and materialises its dimorphic sexual categories through sex-tests (ibid. 378) as a way to police the boundary of the sexual dichotomy and to uphold the notion of binary coded sexual difference.

### **Discursive production of masculinity**

The system of sexual differentiation in sport is supplemented by a classificatory system of gendered appearance and behaviour. Masculine and feminine gender roles may be perceived as a semiotic system of the body, by which the binary categories of the sexed body are naturalised. As Whannel points out, “part of the ideological work that is performed through the representation of sport stars is precisely to do with the normalization of hegemonic masculinity and the marginalisation of alternative masculinities.” (p. 64). Since the “male sex



role” is “hegemonic” (Connell 84), it is not natural or given prior to discourse, even if it may come across as naturalised because of the force with which it is iterated through representations in public spaces such as sport. To Julie Kristeva masculinity is the category which is taken for granted while the feminine is othered (Moi 204-221). Sport tends to provide resilient metaphors for the perpetuation of a patriarchy in which masculinity, or the dominant notion of gendered sexual behaviour, serves as the unmarked category, or the antithesis against which the “other” is measured (Sabo and Jansen 202-217). If the dichotomy between masculine and feminine is metaphysical and not grounded in objective, natural, or pre-discursive essences, bodies can never be fully inscribed as sexed or gendered.

In this semiotic system women are constructed as sexed, embodied, and as subject to nature’s rhythms and limitations.

In such a binary and hierarchical logic of nature-culture the presence of one element is necessary for the absence of the other. The sign “nature” acquires its cultural value only because of the other sign, “culture”, to which it is opposed. The ideology of this dichotomy needed invisible women in the public sphere. To the extent that they were in focus on this arena, they were associated with sexuality. (von der Lippe 174)

As the unmarked category against which dominant notions of masculinity may be established, feminine finds its dictionary definition as “womanish, effeminate”, the latter term designating the practice of “making unmanly, to enervate. To grow weak, languish”, while masculine is defined as “manly, virile, vigorous, powerful” (Pronger 144). Since it is the masculine category that is unmarked, and serves as the norm or centre against which the other is demarcated, it is to a large extent “women’s footballing bodies [that] are disciplined by the woman-feminine-heterosexual imperative that supports sport’s system of sex-gender differentiation” (Caudwell 376), while for men it may be more a matter of not suffering a loss of masculine capital by being associated with appearances or practices that are coded as

feminine in the dominant order.

The semiotic system of sport tends to perpetuate the dominance of hegemonic masculinities. Even if, or, perhaps, precisely because, that which is feminine and masculine are taken as social constructs, or as patterns of sexuality and behaviour imposed by social and cultural norms and not a necessary expression of a binary biological code, the particular values that should be associated with the biologically coded sexes remain a matter of contestation. Attending and participating in sport tend to serve as male bonding exercises with the capacity to “reinforce men’s collective power over women” by perpetuating “familial patriarchy, the mythos of the frontiersman, and the symbolism of the phallus” (Sabo and Jansen 207).

The disciplinary regime of sport operates a semiotic system that divides the two sexes that is regarded as natural, or prior to discourse, along lines of gender, or culturally manufactured patterns of appearance and behaviour. In a sport such as football there are at least three disciplinary practices that produce a body as recognisably feminine, or in conformance with the dominant sex-gender order. These are practices that regulate body size, appearance, or “the use of the body as an ornamental surface”, as well as “the bodily display of a repertoire of appropriate gestures and postures” (Caudwell 376). The body as a site for inscription of gender signification includes body hair, as “hair is viewed as a critical aspect of femininity and therefore a crucial indicator of sex” (ibid. 383).

From sport’s early phase of appropriation “the athleticism and muscular Christianity of nineteenth-century English public schools was originally built around a reappropriation and reconstruction of Greek idealism, and proposed the construction of rounded and harmonious development of mind and body” (Whannel 65), and provided a space in which to separate men from women. Sport offered a field of practice by which men could be seen to act while

women were relegated to the roles of passively spectating, admiring and providing cricket teas (ibid. 67). The athlete of the early twentieth century was characterised by “masculine ‘traits’ like audacity, power, freedom, independence, pride, potency and ambitiousness. [...] The up-right position of the back and the stretched arm in front of the body were to connote masculinity.” (von der Lippe 171). Woman was symbolised as an introvert figure, who folded

her arm around her body, her knees together and slightly bent and the expression of her face connoting aspects of mildness. The semiotics of the feminine body was to symbolize humility, subjection, resignation and weakness. [...] The arms of a woman within mainstream bourgeois ideology were not to be trained, while muscles of the legs were supposed to be invisible, at least those on the thighs. (ibid.)

In contrast to the received notion that it is the body that shapes gender roles, it would appear that it is notions of gendered appearances and behaviour that tend to shape the body.

It is apparent that the taken-for-granted notion that women and men have to be distinguishable is most evident within sporting contexts. In addition, there is the structural and discursive demarcation of sport as “women’s sport” or “men’s sport.” Football in particular has been and continues to be defined as a “man’s sport.” In this way playing usually acts as a signifier of manliness for men and mostly functions to obdurate the man-masculine-heterosexual order. (Caudwell 378)

The boundaries between categories of sex and gender are as diffuse as the concepts of sex and gender themselves, and a human body that features broad shoulders or short hair may be classified as a property of the male sex category, or as a masculine body. Such conceptions of what it means to be man or woman and how these sexual categories should be signified is naturalised to the extent that “the Women’s World Cup 1999 logo included a ponytail to signify femininity” (ibid. 380). Masculine or feminine are used to characterise appearance and behaviour, and dominantly as marking bodies as properties of either category of sex. Hence, a female body with short hair or a male body with long fingernails may be seen to transgress the dominant sex-gender order.

## Effeminate bodies

Since sport served as a masculine proving ground, muscular intensity signified the extent to which a male body could measure up among his peers. From its inception sport served as “one of the social practices that most clearly serves to demarcate gender” (Whannel 70). If in the Western sexual economy courage, strength and power has been conflated with virility and potency, masculinity has become associated with physical strength, dexterity, and sexual prowess. The kind of heterosexist hegemony that dominates mass manufactured sport tends to assume binary heterosexual terms where men’s physical contacts with men are rigidly proscribed by heterosexual assumptions and rules of engagement and interpretation (Sabo and Jansen 207). However, to Pronger, who tends to identify masculinity with muscularity, the “development and display of physical strength” in athletics is a strategy to operate power relations between men and women:

Given the patriarchal heterosexual significance of masculinity, it can have a special meaning for gay men. In their personal lives, many urban gay men do not benefit significantly from the hegemony that masculinity is meant to afford men. [...] Gay men can come to see that the power relations for which the semiotics of masculinity and femininity constitute a strategy have little to do with their lives. The meaning of masculinity, consequently, begins to change. Although masculinity is often the object of desire for gay men, its role in their lives is ironic. [...] For many gay men, masculinity and femininity cease to be experienced as what one *is*, and they become, quite consciously, ways in which one *acts*. (Pronger 144-145)

As effeminate behaviour in men is regarded as a sign of homosexuality, men may employ appearances and behaviours that are regarded as feminine in order to call attention to their sexuality. In this view, power should not be perceived as located or owned by any particular group or individual, but exercised and put into practice. Gendered codes of appearance and behaviour may be used to signify and reinscribe sex and gender roles that challenge the

dominant binary order.

Effeminate behaviour in men and masculinity in women may be perceived as at odds with the established sex-gender order to the extent that they become unintelligible, and are considered as “abject bodies” (Butler; Caudwell 377). A hairy woman’s body or a man’s body that behaves in a manner that is considered effeminate may produce resistance and attempts to reestablish the dominant sex-gender order. As “queer subjects have publicly challenged hegemonic heterosexual notions of masculinity and femininity and resisted mutually exclusive and dimorphic gender norms” such transgressive practices have met with highly negative responses from the dominant sex-gender order. Caudwell points out that while international tennis player Martina Navratilova has “effectively unsettled the rigidity of gendered expectations and broadened the scope of acceptable gender performance” in sport, “the butch lesbian body is largely pathologized and abhorred in sporting contexts” (pp. 381-382).

Moral entrepreneurs may find a particularly attractive arena to counter their sense of a crisis in masculinity in sport as a “symbolic arena in which heroes can parade, epitomizing the finest, most noble values and providing role models to which boys can aspire” (Whannel 7). The healthy, heterosexual masculinity of epic sport may be put to use in promoting, perpetuating and naturalising a certain conception of what should be (re-)constituted as a sex-gender order. Attempts at naturalising a particular conceptualisation of gender and sexuality can never be sutured, as such endeavours to establish a norm for gendered appearance and behaviour can only be established against an outside which will always threaten to crack or blur the boundary between that which is conceived as the orderly, normal and natural inside and the unruly and threatening outside, and, hence, depends on the outside for its very constitution. Whannel finds that “sport, in this sense, is a form of magical performance in

which, despite its manifest physicality, sexuality has been masked and marginalized. Encounter with female sexuality can be erased and encounter with homoerotic desire can be repressed. But, to preserve these fragile barriers and to police heterosexual masculinity, cultures of hardness develop.” (pp. 67-68). However, such attempts to suture a heterosexist conception of sex and sexuality through sport in its dominant representation must always run up against the outside against which it is discursively produced.

The closed epic structure is always threatened by novelising strategies, or discursive manoeuvres to transform the epic and bring it into contact with the present. Such novelising strategies include the unmasking of the wise man, such as in the Socratic dialogues, highlighting the excessive rather than the strictly limiting aspects of humans, and establishing the possibility of a refashioning of the self (Bakhtin 20-40). While the image of the Roman centurion and his muscular male torso may have had the purpose of deterring or inhibiting other men, in the context of gay athletics the same representation may invite or attract other men (Pronger 151). The possibility of a misreading of this image may enable the kind of ambivalent laughter where the meanings of the dominant order of gender and sexuality are put to the test. Novelisation brings about the possibility of knowledge, rather than memory, as the creative impulse of signification by “uncrowning” the emperor and making him subject to experimentation and games. A man with bulging biceps and thunderous thighs wearing a slinky dress and a tiara indicates how novelistic representation may be put to utopian, rather than merely dystopian use.<sup>81</sup>

### **5.1. Case: South Africa in the 1998 Football World Cup**

We should expect [“inventions” of tradition] to occur more frequently when a rapid transformation of society weakens or destroys the social patterns for

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<sup>81</sup> The example is from Pronger 151.

which “old” traditions had been designed, producing new ones to which they were not applicable, or when such old traditions and their institutional carriers and promulgators no longer prove sufficiently adaptable and flexible, or are otherwise eliminated. (Hobsbawm and Ranger 3)

This chapter investigates the relationship between sport, marketing and the making of national identity in post-apartheid South Africa. The screening of the 1998 Football World Cup on South African television provides a fascinating opportunity to track the emergent contours of this triangle. The Football World Cup was the occasion of an interesting contrast with the Rugby World Cup of three years before, since while the latter was a moment of victory for the South African team, the former was a occasion of defeat. Both were crucial events in the making of a national tradition, though the Football World Cup provides in many ways a more revealing negotiation of this tradition under construction.

The chapter is an attempt, then, to examine in some detail this moment of symbolic dissemination, looking in particular at an emerging set of national symbols as they were presented and negotiated by the SABC, the national broadcaster. National traditions are often narrated in terms of the epic genre.<sup>82</sup> One of the reasons for my interest in the presentation of the Football World Cup has been to analyse its framing in terms of its potential as future epic – since the epic can only be fully realised at a point in time removed from the national event.

We look, too, at the emergence and construction of the individual voice in the context of the new democracy. Both advertisers and the national story disseminated by the SABC promoted the sporting individual as a national icon, whose authority as such invests him with authority in the national discourse.

Two months after the Boipatong massacre in 1992, an incident that left forty-two black people dead, thousands of white South Africans stood cheering to the national anthem of the former apartheid regime, “Die Stem van Suid-Afrika”, in a packed rugby stadium in

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<sup>82</sup> See also chapter 5 for a fuller discussion of Bakhtin's notion of the epic.

Johannesburg.<sup>83</sup> The African National Congress (ANC) had finally endorsed the match against New Zealand – critical to abandoning the isolation of South African sport – while negotiations over a peaceful settlement were still in progress. The game was the first international rugby event on South African soil since the end of the sports boycott, which had lasted from the 1960s and ended with the culmination of the Apartheid policy. The ANC stipulated, however, the “Die Stem” should not be played. Rugby officials, set on rejoining the international sporting community, agreed to refrain from playing the anthem. However, “since the majority of fans were waving the flag and singing the anthem vigorously”, rugby president Louis Luyt arranged for the anthem to be played anyway (Nauright 165). The political signal emanating from the stands of Ellis Park on 15 August 1992 was interpreted as one of traditionalism and defiance, directed against the form and content of South Africa’s political transformation. One sports administrator concluded that the incident was “a reminder of the minority white dominance and blatant arrogance” that prevailed in South African sport at the time. He perceived the incident as “a flagrant disregard for the emotions felt over *apartheid* symbols” (Nauright 176). The incident illustrates Hobsbawm’s proposition about societies where old social patterns are weakened or destroyed. “Die Stem”, always contested as a symbol of nation, was deployed here as a sign of resistance to change.

Scholars have commented on an emerging “new iconography” in South Africa.<sup>84</sup> The Football World Cup offered an opportunity for the new power-holders to align themselves with what is possibly the country’s most popular sport. South Africa’s opening match against France was seen by more than four million people in South Africa.<sup>85</sup> At this moment, the new

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<sup>83</sup> Chapter 4.1 discusses South African nationalism at greater length.

<sup>84</sup> The expression is from Balseiro (p. 5). She suggests further that “in the developing post-apartheid order, new images of linguistic and racial plurality are being created on a stage where tradition and post-modernity coalesce” (ibid.). De Beer and Steyn portray the way South African symbols were seen as “apartheid symbols” in reports and letters to the media around the time of the 1992 Olympic Games. The South African team did not wear the Springbok emblem and the national flag was absent. The IOC had “decided against the wearing of political slogans” (De Beer and Steyn 228-229).

<sup>85</sup> In the most recent census (2001) the population of South Africa was about 45 million.



regime could use the state-owned broadcasting media to transmit the new national doctrine and its symbols to a significant proportion of the population. This chapter is an attempt to examine this national moment of symbolic dissemination, and in particular the political dimension of the emerging national symbols as they were presented on the SABC.

The Football World Cup took place in a space defined as equal. International football offers a space of limited and (relatively) sovereign teams, in a potentially equal relationship. The supposed objectivity of football can be construed as a promise of achievable equality, which can be projected onto the nations that participate in the World Cup, and, furthermore, onto the fans that cheer for “their” national team.

### **Epic tradition**

The SABC’s mediation of the Football World Cup constituted an example of epic tradition in the making. The mediation of South Africa’s opening game was in part an attempt to inscribe the event into a tradition of national epics. In the SABC studio before the game, Mark Mangena concurred that “this is the time we have been waiting for. South Africa has a chance today to write history.”<sup>86</sup> Mangena conflated the football team with the spectators by stating that “we” can write history, in a moment when the national football team embodied the nation. He described a history of the nation by constituting the football game as a potential subject for a national epic. To promote national consciousness, the SABC transmitted a music video during the broadcast. The video featured slogans such as “To be South African is to believe in miracles” and “For this united nation, no challenge has been too great”.<sup>87</sup> These banners were mixed with authentic footage of famous moments in recent South African history, such as

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<sup>86</sup> All quotations from the transmission are from a transcript of *France-South Africa* (1998).

<sup>87</sup> Notably, the song is written and performed by the American artist Robin Kelly. “I Believe I Can Fly” and first featured on the soundtrack of the basketball movie *Space Jam* (directed by Joe Pytka, Tony Cervone and Bruce W. Smith, 1996) starring the black American basketball superstar Michael Jordan.

Nelson Mandela taking the presidential oath, with the former president F.W. de Klerk by his side, and Mandela in a Springbok team jersey and cap cheering alongside South African rugby captain Francois Pienaar, recapturing South Africa's victory in the 1995 Rugby World Cup. Reiterating the national significance of these images functioned to educate viewers in a common national heritage. This in itself contributed to establishing an interpersonal, or national, tradition, onto which new epics could be built.

While promoting collective virtues, for instance through the banner "Tonight we rise above the troubles of daily life and stand together again", the video defined South Africanness as "believing in miracles", a belief in the extraordinary. The agent of these miracles appears to be, in apparent contradiction to the messages of collectivity, the singular individual. This is an excerpt from the lyrics:

I believe I can fly,  
 I believe I can touch the sky  
 I think about it every night and day  
 Spread my wings and fly away  
 [...]  
 'Cause I believe in me  
 If I can see it then I can do it  
 If you just believe it, there's nothing to it  
 I believe I can fly

The singer is able to "fly away" and "touch the sky", allegedly because of his faith in himself. Promoting a vision of complete and singular individuality, the words of the song promoted values central to liberal conceptions of a market-oriented new South Africa: after the upset of racially based justifications of social difference the "market economy seems to be the mechanism that now enforces the racial segregation once upheld through the nefarious combination of legislation and brute force" (Balseiro 6). Strategies of the market economy, such as the doctrine of individual abilities powerful enough to subdue structured differences,

were inscribed into the South African epic framing the South African team's game in the Football World Cup.

The coverage of the France-South Africa opening match made use of multiple narrators with varying degrees of autonomy (for example, the anchor in the studio receiving a report from a journalist at a local drive-in cinema), and several levels of narration (the broadcaster determines formal aspects of both the editorial and commercial content, but these narrative instances are relatively independent of each other). Furthermore, the degree of independence granted to one narrative was structured by its level in the hierarchy of narration (the length of commercial breaks was determined by the broadcaster). Audiences structure their viewing around the levels of narration, for example, by not watching the screen during commercial breaks. No narrating instance can claim omnipotence. The SABC can partly control the content of advertisements through its rules and other forms of imposition, but an advertisement's final design is controlled by the advertiser.

### **Individual values**

Messages at different narrative levels displayed similar elements in the broadcast. To a certain degree both advertisers and the national story disseminated by the SABC promoted individual values. In the music video described above, the young black football player Benni McCarthy functioned as a national icon, symbolising a personal ability to fly. Later in the broadcast, featuring in an advertisement, he was made to represent the unique sporting individual with authority to recommend a certain brand of deodorant. These two discourses, the national and the commercial, dominated the football game throughout the transmission.

Modern national narratives are more often than not financed by commercial sponsors, whose messages increasingly occupy the aural and visual space. The Los Angeles Olympic

Games were so thoroughly sponsored that the “blurring of the line between the two realms [of commerce and sport] was so complete that, at times, it was difficult to tell exactly what one was watching” (Jhally 79). During the SABC’s transmission of the Football World Cup, the commercial breaks variously sustained and departed from the national story. While some advertisements were clearly designed for the event (particularly those for products that are marketed across the globe), others were re-runs of commercials familiar to regular SABC viewers. The transmission included seventeen commercials before the game started. About half of these used the nation as a central selling-point. The scheduling of commercials, with regular commercial breaks before and after each half, and sponsors paying to display their logos on the screen during the game, adhered to principles of advertising apparent in previous transmissions of international sporting events (de Beer and Steyn 219-20).

The commercials that bonded with the event did so in various ways. In one instance, a national chain of stationery stores pronounced its profound allegiance to the nation in an advertisement for music tapes. The advertisement featured an artist in the popular kwaito genre, a local form that merges R&B with techno and “African” music, followed by both black and white announcers proclaiming that “kwaito is the sound of the new South Africa”. The existence of a modern “new South Africa” was the main commercial argument. In this instance, the discourse of modernity linked non-racialism to emerging musical forms, pronounced in the new nation.

Some advertisers linked the modern nation to projected advances in sport. A shoe-polish manufacturer announced that its brand had been “protecting the shoes of Africa’s most aspiring football stars”. The advertisement closed with the message, “Shine on, Bafana Bafana, shine on”, thus suggesting that this particular brand of shoe polish provides a bond between the aspirations of individuals and those of a perceived national sporting collective.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Bafana Bafana, the common name for South Africa's national football team, was introduced by the

Similarly, an insurance company enunciated its dedication to the South African Olympic team by depicting a black businessman who, imagining himself a sprinter, races across a downtown intersection. In both instances, national advances were lined to individual imagination, and ultimately to the particular product for sale.

Multinational advertisers can economise on their advertising budgets by producing commercials that will appeal to audiences from more than one nation. The Football World Cup provided an opportunity to link sport to the product on offer, so that the product became associated either with the event or with the particular sport. A global soft-drink manufacturer promoted its brand in an advertisement without spoken words. In the absence of any spoken language – language being one of the hallmarks of the nation – spectators were addressed as members of a sporting community, rather than a national community.<sup>89</sup> In this advertisement football was constructed as one of a number of popular practices that stretch across national boundaries. Advertisements drawing on sporting subjects across national borders support the idea of an autonomous sports world through representations of sports communities disengaged from linguistic or national divisions.

### **Questions of autonomy**

The relationship between the languages of football, nation and commerce highlights a central concern in post-Marxist study of culture in general, and of football in particular. In traditional Marxist analysis the economy figures as a determinant of superstructural discourses, such as those of football and the nation (Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* 75-84).

The subjugation of these practices and identities to the economy is evidenced by struggles and

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black mainstream newspaper the *Sowetan*. The expression is a duplication of the isiZulu word for “boys” and is often used as a term of endearment.

<sup>89</sup> The English-language banners at the end of the advertisement function as a logo for the soft-drink manufacturer. Although this instance of a “branded language” raises questions of imperial linguistic practices, English is not presented on a level of competing national languages. A rational globalisation of the product necessitates homogenising its marketing lingo, it could be argued.

negotiations over independence from economic determinants. The issue at stake is whether sport is experiencing an evolution or devolution of autonomy. If sport's self-determination is merely a function of the mode of production, the degree of autonomy can be measured as relative to the market's dominance. Linear perceptions of sport's autonomy, where the growth of "market value" is necessarily paralleled by a demise in self-determination on the side of sports, are faced with several complicating factors.

The market is not sport's only negotiant. While states endeavour to encapsulate the messages of international sports events, sport's share in the deal is to reach a vast audience, a constituency of potential players and supporters. Audience ratings suggest, furthermore, that viewing increases when national identity is addressed: 78 per cent of those who had their televisions switched on watched the game between France and South Africa, which topped the ratings in all linguistic groups, with a total of around four million viewers. South Africa's game against France reached an audience rating of 25.5, with high scores in all linguistic groups. When it became clear that the South African team would be knocked out in the opening stage of the tournament, interest waned for their final game against Saudi Arabia. The viewer consequently decreased to 20.9 in the Nguni/Sotho group, and to just 10.1 in the English/Afrikaans group. These figures indicate that both an emergent South African discourse and football gains from the partnership. The alliance between nation and sport is motivated by the partners' common need for exposure; the partnership between nation and football is facilitated by the market.

A central characteristic of television's treatment of sport is that of "audience-building by forging points of identification with the viewer" (Blain, Boyle, and O'Donnell 45). In the introduction to the opening match, for example, the presenter informed viewers that "our" first match was about to start, and that "our boys" were preparing for the game. National

broadcasters, including public broadcasters such as the SABC, may underline the national element in common to viewers and the mediation in an attempt to build audiences. Goldlust notes that secular rituals are designed to “symbolise the validity of the social order and reconfirm the collective identification of the populace to the principles upon which it is based” (p. 130). National meanings are attached to these rituals when they are disseminated. As a national event, South Africa’s venture into top international football offered an opportunity to reaffirm the SABC’s position as a national broadcaster. During apartheid SABC’s audience was largely white. The Football World Cup served as an event through which the SABC could present and confirm a new national doctrine on race relations. By addressing a wider audience, such a broadcasters may use major sporting events to increase its viewership and legitimacy as a public service broadcaster.

The National Professional Football League (NPSL) became dominant in South Africa in the 1970s. The NPSL was set up by the whites-only Football Association of South Africa as a professional competition for “Africans”. The competing South African Football Federation Professional League (SASF-PL), run by a non-racial organisation, had less access to capital and municipally controlled grounds. In the late 1960s, two prominent players, Orlando Pirates and Moroka Swallows, left SASF-PL for NPSL, while some teams left the whites-only competition for one of the “African” leagues. John Nauright attributes the NPSL’s dominant position to the large support for the clubs Pirates and Swallows, and the fact that their crowds “attracted greater sponsorship and [the NPSL] became the dominant professional league” (p. 119). In contrast to other sports, such as rugby and cricket, by the time of the Football World Cup, football had been racially integrated at the top national level for more than twenty years. Football was thus an arena where the new regime’s ideology could be disseminated to an audience already familiar with multiracial representations.

## **“Race” and gender**

The introduction to the match served to represent neo-South African values. Presenters Navan Chetty and Connie Masilo, embodying the colour (“race”) diversity promoted by the new regime, introduced the broadcast in a mix of English and Sotho, two of South Africa’s eleven official languages. Immediately following the introduction, SABC’s division for elite sport broadcasts, Allsport, transmitted its jingle, an “African” male-choir singing over a slogan proclaiming “Inspiration for the Nation”. Mixing “cultures” that were previously seen as separable, and that indeed were separated by law, the video promoted English as the main language of South Africa, but also reconfirmed a heterodox version of the previous linguistic hegemony.<sup>90</sup>

Echoing the Freedom Charter, the Preamble to the Constitution asserts that “we, the people of South Africa ... believe that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity”. This diversity stretches beyond the limits of linguistic difference. During the transmission the unifying element was often stressed verbally while diversity was visually represented. In the music video described above, the song’s celebration of individual ability to fly was supported by a positive evaluation of diversity and unity. The broadcast’s insistence on the priority of unity did not deny the possibility of diversity within the nation. Studio host Martin Locke went on to tell his viewers that “this absolutely diverse nation has truly come together” for this game. The metaphor of a social gathering, a mass meeting, allows for the possibility of difference among the participants.

Representations of unity stretched across “racial” boundaries in the transmission of South Africa’s opening game, but generally assigned to men the roles of performers and analysers. Women were most often rendered as spectators and supporters. The football game

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<sup>90</sup> A hegemony which was at least dual (Afrikaans and English) and always heavily contested.



and its framing elements served to reiterate the sexual division of labour that characterises mediated sports: “If women are accommodated into the discourses of televised football, they are treated in both a marginal and trivial manner. Football as portrayed on television remains a bastion of male identity.” (Blain, Boyle, and O’Donnell, 39). In a study of two Australian newspapers, women’s share of sports coverage was found to remain at 13.5 per cent between 1965 and 1990 (Brown 9).

In the World Cup broadcast, women were present as active participants in only two instances. Firstly, female dancers were depicted in the report from a male journalist on the atmosphere in Marseilles prior to the game. These were his opening comments in the report: “These were the dancing girls that were entertaining everyone on the streets outside [Images of girls dancing with exposed bellies.] Pretty girls with colourful dresses. Brazilian skirts, the whites of England, the skirts of the South African part was clearly unbelievable stuff [sic].”

A contrast emerges between the male body, which participates in the making of national identity through skill and will, and the female body, which, though physically active, is rendered passive as a sexual spectacle for consumption. Women’s role therefore remains symbolic. It is interesting to note the trend in the 1990s for football teams to stage beauty competitions for their female fans, the winner to represent the team at matches and social and/or marketing occasions. This trend can be seen as a reaction to the growing number of female fans who follow the teams. Apparently, no similar representative image is considered necessary for male fans. In this sense, men’s presence as spectators is naturalised whereas women’s is symbolically contained.

After the first commercial break, a female reporter interviewed spectators attending a live screening of the game. Asking the participants about their predictions for the match, her questions centred around the emotional aspects of the collective viewing experience. The final

words of her report were intended to elicit a party-roar from the crowd: “It sure is happening here. And all of you, we want a big serenade: What do we say to France?” In short, although she was reporting from the live screening, her questions made it possible to project her as a party hostess. Women were permitted to comment on “trivial” aspects and bring colour to the event.

The SABC’s attempt to construct a unified, multiracial identification around the South African team represented a tradition in the making. While the broadcast opened with grand epic gestures, the game was reinterpreted immediately after it was clear that South Africa had lost to the hosts. In an interview after the match, then deputy president Thabo Mbeki was asked what his message was to the players when he visited them at their hotel before the game. In his response Mbeki expressed the separation between the nation and the nation’s sporting representatives. His message was that “the whole country wishes them very well, and everybody is looking forward to their [sic] doing very well, today and during the rest of the tournament.” Asked about South Africa’s prospects in the tournament, Mbeki answered that “the confidence of the team has grown, and I think they’ll do better next time.” The all-encompassing “we”, so predominant in the opening stages of the transmission, was nowhere to be found in the deputy president’s replies. Instead he used the pronouns “them”, “their”, and “they”. The team could no longer be said to embody the nation, in Mbeki’s statements, but at most to represent it.

The football match against France will hardly be inscribed into a tradition of high points in neo-South African sporting history. South Africa’s triumph in the 1995 Rugby World Cup has become a founding moment in the national sports tradition, because epics can only be constructed around national victories. As Bakhtin reminds us: “The world of the epic is the national heroic past: it is a world of ‘beginnings’ and ‘peak times’ in the national history, a

world of fathers and of founders of families, a world of ‘firsts’ and ‘bests’” (p. 13). Mbeki was unable to inscribe the moment into a national epic tradition, and instead distanced the team from the nation.

France, who won a victory over South Africa in the opening game, later went on to win the World Cup. President Jacques Chirac claimed that the “multi-coloured” team was a projection of France’s soul: “This victory shows solidarity and cohesion. It shows that France has a soul or is in search for one ... This tricolour and multi-colour team has given a beautiful image of France and its humanity” (Webster 18). The victory was interpreted as a projection of “us”. Chirac did not distinguish between the nation and the team as Mbeki did in his post-match comments. In the case of victory the French national leader used the occasion to promote a certain political view of the nation. His statement was inserted into a debate over political co-operation with Jean-Marie Le Pen’s right-wing National Front. While Le Pen had been arguing for “national preference”, Chirac warned that holding talks on co-operation with Le Pen on the issue was “out of place and potentially dangerous” (Webster 18).

It should come as no surprise that the SABC used the Football World Cup to disseminate a version of the new South African nation. Common myths and traditions are central to imagined national communities, and the World Cup was a possible moment in a line of national victories. The national broadcaster used epic elements in an attempt to fix the meaning of the nation’s recent past as leading inevitably to the birth of the multicultural nation: an invention of tradition.

## 6. National, authentic, excessive: Toward a globalised body of sports

Those who set out to investigate the relationships that constitute power and its investment in the body are confronted with a number of questions concerning the locations and inscriptions of values, and how such values are signified and articulated in practice. This chapter contrasts the work of Pierre Bourdieu with remarks Michel Foucault gave on the embodied nature of power. Foucault made a connection between desire and the work of power on the body, implicating that this association is productive of both resistance and coercion.<sup>91</sup> Our bodies are regulated and shaped by power, and empowered in the very process of moulding. What is at stake, then, is, on the one hand, to make an account of the kinds of investments that power make in the body, and the values that are inscribed into it, and, on the other, how bodies may respond, and, in the process becoming subjects of empowerment.

The concerns here are as much with values *of* the body, as they are with values *in* the body, or what may be referred to as a theory of belief. As Foucault points out, the modern subject is "a reality fabricated by [a] specific technology of power that I have called 'discipline'. [...] Power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth" (1977: 194). This kind of understanding of the body, then, is intimately linked with the production of consent. As Pierre Bourdieu notes, "obedience consists in large part in belief, and belief is what the body (*corps*) concedes even when the mind (*l'esprit*) says no"

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<sup>91</sup> Mastery and awareness of one's own body can be acquired only through the effect of an investment of power in the body: gymnastics, exercises, muscle-building, nudism, glorification of the body beautiful. All of this belongs to the pathway leading to the desire of one's own body, by way of the insistent, persistent, meticulous work of power on the bodies of children or soldiers, the healthy bodies. But once power produces this effect, there inevitably emerge the responding claims and affirmations, those of one's own body against power, of health against the economic system, of pleasure against the moral norms of sexuality, marriage, decency. Suddenly, what had made power strong becomes used to attack it. Power, after investing itself in the body, finds itself exposed to a counter-attack in that same body. (Foucault 1980: 156)

(1988: 161). Discipline brings about belief, and a kind of belief that is inscribed into the body of its subject. The micro-technologies under investigation in this chapter shape dispositions, and are put to work as vehicles in the production of subjects.<sup>92</sup>

If values *in* the body refer to the inscription of particular values into the physical properties of subjects, nationalizing the body entails a process of embodiment, whereby distinct values are signified as national. These properties are, by extension, expressed *through* the body, as attachments of value to the body of the subject. In other words, these processes of evaluation express themselves both in terms of how bodies are valued – i.e. which signifiers need to be in place for bodies to be considered valuable, and which values are expressed through the body – and in the sense that these values are inscribed or embodied in subjects of power. However, as Claudio Tamburrini points out, there may be a contradiction in terms between the notion of sport, and particularly professional sport, as a field mass production, and its dominant values, such as the gentlemanly code of "fair play," and an air of disinterested rôle distance (2000: 215-216). Furthermore, as these values are expressed through events of mass dissemination, they are also, in turn, inscribed into the bodies of spectators, and, through the technology of discipline, the bodies of children.

This is not to say that the values that are inscribed into national bodies through the Football World Cup or through the Physical Education curriculum, are of the same kind as was the case with the national discipline dreamt of in the late 18th century. Comte Jacques-Antoine-Hippolyte de Guibert, urged that "discipline must be made national," disputing the "vulgar prejudice by which we are made to imagine that empires are subjected to an impervious law of decline and ruin" (Foucault 1977: 169). Rather, the values of the military body, which Napoleon sought to inscribe into the entirety of the social body through

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<sup>92</sup> To Bourdieu, dispositions signify actors' "predisposition, tendency, propensity or inclination" of action and thought (1977: 214 n.1).

meticulous individual training and control, are increasingly complemented by a cluster of values that are attached to a body signified as "natural," "healthy," or "authentic." This chapter shows how the body produced through the Physical Education curriculum in Norway is changing from a military body, via a body appreciative of "fair play," a disinterested air of rôle distance, and of sports as ends in themselves, to a body enmeshed in what Pierre Bourdieu referred as the "cult of the natural and authentic." Such a body enables a more autonomous cultural field of sport compared to nationalism's epic body, since it no longer places nations in a necessarily antagonistic relation to each other. Instead, the impure and unnatural poses as new opponents of the sporting body. After a discussion of a possible paradox resulting from applying certain notions of authenticity to sports in schools and as mass disseminated spectacles, the question is raised if not the current obsession with the natural and pure in combination with a rigorously quantified body points to that sports increasingly functions to symbolize excessive and ineffable aspects of our existence. Bourdieu's notion of *illusio* shows how participants can arrive at this understanding through an experience of the seductive character of sports, and only then being in a position to become conscious of this effect and, in turn, emancipate themselves.

### **School sports: A Physical Education curriculum**

In order to situate the purpose of Physical Education as part of the national curriculum in Norway, it is necessary to understand how it was inserted into, on the one hand, a totality of sporting practices, and, on the other, the totality of education as a moment in the construction of national bodies, or, as one of a number of practices set to instil a sort of national discipline. The sports movement in Norway was originally conceived as a measure of national defence against Swedish rule. Therefore, exercises intended to form character "in youth and soldiers"

were central to Physical Education at its inception. In the 1922 national curriculum, Physical Education was referred to as *gymnastikk*, after its single constituent element, a sort of gymnastics exercised in groups, emphasizing control of each individual pupil's activity, as well as coordinating the entirety of the unit. Drill exercises were central, and the teacher would use commands such as "Straight," "Attention," and "At rest" (By 1998: 3-4). The purpose of Physical Education was both to produce a body that may be subjected, used, transformed, and improved, as well as to facilitate the kind of hierarchical observation that would link visibility and power, characteristic of the military camp.

The kind of political anatomy of detail prescribed by Napoleon's national discipline, produced children's bodies as national capital available for inscription. Disciplinary power was elaborated through three simple instruments: hierarchical organization, normalizing judgement, and the combination of the two in the examination (Foucault 1977: 170). The military camp-style organization of Physical Education in the 1922 curriculum lent itself well to these techniques. Children could be ordered according to how they were evaluated on a normative scale, and in keeping with their internal rank. The semi-judicial status of normative judgement made it an invaluable component in the attempt to implement a "military model as a fundamental means of preventing civil disorder" (1977: 168). This meticulous attention to detail in each child was a founding moment in producing the modern subject as individual.

When sport was included as a general field of practice in the national curriculum of 1939, central targets for Physical Education included reinforcing pupils' health and imbuing them with a sense of "good and beautiful body posture and teach[ing] them to use limbs and joints effortlessly and freely," as well as making pupils "fond of gymnastics and sports, so that they sustain their physical exercises after terminating their school education" (By 1998: 5), in other words, an approach intended not only to design bodies for military defence, but to instil

in them an appreciation for sports as ends in themselves. School sport in Norway were adapted in their usage from English public schools, where vulgar games had been appropriated by a principle of conversion into "bodily exercises, activities which [had become] an end in themselves, a sort of physical art for art's sake" (Bourdieu 1993: 342). As these practices were disseminated through the vehicle of national curricula, the political philosophy of sport remained intimately linked to the moral ideas of the dominant fractions of the dominant class, including a theory of amateurism and a code of "fair play."

The distinctive values of dispositions are expressed both in a person's outward appearance, for instance through her or his body-posture (soldier vs. civilian, school master vs. pupil, etc.), and in the relational assessment of practices. Thus, when the field of sport codes in the Physical Education curriculum were expanded from the singular *Lingegymnastikk* in the 1922 curriculum, to the more general "gymnastics and sport" 17 years later, the shift may be understood as an expression of changes in the field of power, and, ultimately, in the field of class relations. The Labor party (*Arbeiderpartiet*) took government for the first time in 1936, and the shift in political power entailed a dethroning of the hitherto exclusivity of gymnastics – perceived as an activity associated with the upper-class – and an expansion of the array of sports included in Physical Education. Also, the organisational apparatus of sport had changed. Soon after its inception in 1861, national sport association branched into two separate associations. In the early twentieth century, voluntary sport was administered by two country-wide organizations, the bourgeois National Sports Organization (*Landsforbundet for idrett*) and the socialist Worker's Sports Association (*Arbeidernes Idrettsforbund*). In 1939, the year of the new Physical Education curriculum, these two organizations merged. However, even though Labor took political power and the workers's sports movement was included in the sporting mainstream, the values associated with the dominant fraction of the dominant



class strengthened their position in the Physical Education curriculum.

Sport was among the activities designed to train the character of future leaders, both with regards to their body posture, i.e. the outward image of their bodies, and by inculcating courage and "manliness." The sons of the aristocracy attending English public schools were imbued with a will to win, common to all subjects regarded as soldiers, but, in their case, as "will to win within the rules." "Fair play," then, was constructed in accordance with

an aristocratic disposition utterly opposed to the plebeian pursuit of victory at all costs. [...] "Fair play" is the way of playing the game characteristic of those who do not get so carried away by the game as to forget that it *is* a game, those who maintain the "rôle distance" [...] that is implied in all the roles designated for future leaders. (Bourdieu 1993: 343)

The habitus has its own system of evaluation, homologous to the field of class relations, and Physical Education serves to assess the degree to which children are capable of acquiring the preferred dispositions.<sup>93</sup> The formation of character, finding physical expression in exercises intended to control body posture, body-object articulations, and so forth, is intimately linked to a system of values through technologies of discipline.

The current curriculum shifts the emphasis further from its inception as a military body, via a body appreciative of "fair play," rôle distance, and sports as ends in themselves, to a body that can be characterized as "natural" and "authentic." "Play, sports, dance, outdoor life," as well as "natural" experiences, form the central components of the current curriculum. The evaluation of children's bodies is now articulated as a study of their "motor skills" (Ministry of Education 1996: 110), should extend beyond the realm of Physical Education classes to become part of "the daily education," and emphasise individual abilities, work processes and results (Ministry of Education 1996: 79). Adding to the classical age's

*L'Homme-machine* (Foucault 1977: 136) and its image of the disciplined soldier – the ability

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<sup>93</sup> The habitus is an expression of "the unity of the system of dispositions" (Bourdieu 1993: 350).

to stand straight, make exhaustive use of the body, etc. – Physical Education produces a body imbued with more gentle values expressed as a dancing body, or a body engaged in outdoor life.

As Bourdieu shows, the value of sporting practices are regulated according to the physical engagement of the body, so that the most distinctive practices are those with the least body contact, such as golf, tai-chi, or, indeed, gymnastics, while, for instance, wrestling and American football stand at the other end of the continuum, requiring complex engagement with other bodies (1988: 154). While the 1939 curriculum did not explicate any specific sporting codes that should be incorporated in Physical Education, excepting the continued inclusion of gymnastics, the current curriculum makes particular mention of "dance" and "outdoor activities," but no reference to any contact sport. On the one hand, these more gentle activities require little or no engagement with other bodies, and, hence, serve to establish the most distinctive practices as those preferred by the curriculum, and, on the other, their ascending popularity coincides with the emergence of a new bourgeoisie and the invention and marketing of "a new form of poor-man's elitism" (Bourdieu 1984: 220). These new distinctive practices find their expression in, for instance, a preference for hiking in the place of the industrial bourgeoisie's penchant for golf. Physical Education, and its emphasis on outdoor life and "the personal and social benefits of a healthy life-style" (Ministry of Education 1994: 3), demonstrate the rising dominance of the new bourgeoisie. As Bourdieu points out in a study of life-styles in France in the 1980s, practitioners of the "new sports, often imported from America by members of the new bourgeoisie and petite bourgeoisie, in particular by all the people working in fashion – designers, photographers, models, advertising agents, journalists –" constitute a new kind of counter-culture, which, however, "reactivates all the traditions of the typically cultivated cults of the natural, the pure and the

authentic" (Bourdieu 1984: 220).

The dispositions required and taught through the current curriculum, as well as practices marked as distinctive, are manifestations of the values and political philosophy of the dominant fraction of the dominant class, and also marks the inauguration of a new set of values, associated with an emergent petite bourgeoisie. In the current curriculum, dance, outdoor activities and attention to ethical norms, such as "fair play," are complemented by a set of guidelines with regards to health, diet and life-style choices from the age of 10. In other words, despite the emancipation of sport from its inception as an area of activity reserved for the few, its political philosophy prevails, articulated as a "cult of 'fair play', the code of play of those who have the self-control not to get so carried away by the game that they forget that it is 'only a game'" (Bourdieu 1984: 215). Furthermore, through the inclusion of a set of values associated with an petite bourgeoisie, a "gentle, invisible education by exercise and diet which is appropriate to the new morality of health is tending to take the place of the explicitly ethical pedagogy of the past in shaping bodies and minds" (Bourdieu 1984: 219).

### **Elite events: Beyond the national body**

The kind of "authentic" child, appropriated through "outdoor life" and "natural experiences," serves as a further elaboration of the dispositions required by school children. The disciplinary formation of character, articulated as an attention to "motor skills," the values of amateurism and rôle distance, and a new morality of health and authenticity are productive of a new national body, which stands in a complimentary, rather than contradictory, relation to the individual postulated by early humanism. However, implementing the cult of the authentic as a requirement in the curriculum leads to a paradoxical situation. As Walter Benjamin points out, "the whole sphere of authenticity is outside technical – and, of course, not only technical

– reproducibility" (2003: sec. II), hence it cannot be inculcated, shaped, or manufactured. The notion of authenticity "has its basis in ritual, the location of its original use value," (2003: sec. IV), as opposed to exchange value, indicating the ritualistic and pre-capitalistic imaginary of the authentic. The paradox lies in that the curriculum now requires reproduction of a sphere that in itself – to Benjamin – is beyond reproducibility.

To return, then, to our initial distinction between values *of* the body and values *in* the body, the sporting body is now inscribed as a *natural* machine, and the corresponding values are written into the bodies of school children and through regulations and representations of elite sport. In diachronic terms, the values of the preferred sporting body has shifted from its early conceptualizations as a military body – organized in sport association with the purpose of national defence, trained through camp-style gymnastics in schools, and finding expression today in team sports and the intensive quantifications of mass produced sporting events – to a leisurely body, – organized in amateur sport clubs, imbued with notions of sport as a physical art for art's sake in the training of the industrial bourgeoisie's children in private schools, and finding continued expression in the gentlemanly code of fair play today – to the natural, or authentic, body, groomed in schools through the technology of the Physical Education curriculum, articulated in the teaching of health, diet, and life-style choices from the age of 10, and disseminated through mass sporting events through the application of anti-doping discourse to elite athletes. The meaning of these mass sporting events are increasingly hegemonized as national, characterizing each performer as a representative of a nation, or presenting events as a gathering of nations, and so on.

The values *of* the body are quantified, so that nations are ranked according to the performance of their athletes, the degree of amateurism measured on the degree to which teams play in accordance with the gentlemanly code of fair play, and the distinction between a

healthy and unhealthy. The measuring and quantification of the sporting body finds its precise analogy in the way nations are classified according to their inhabitants' expected age of death, i.e. as a quantification of life itself, and an attribution of this measure to the national body.

However, perhaps it is from this location, we should start our investigation into the causes and conditions of the inscription of these values of the body into the bodies of children and spectators of mass sporting events. As Stuart Hall observes, any signifying practice, or practice of articulation, also constitutes a "politics of signification":

The conduct of a social struggle depends, at a particular moment, precisely on the effective dis-articulation of certain key terms, e.g. 'democracy', 'the rule of law', 'civil rights', 'the nation', 'the people', '*Mankind*', from their previous couplings, and their extrapolation to new meanings, representing the emergence of new political subjects. (1982: 78)

If sport is not so much a matter of training for war, flaunting the ability to waste time with leisurely activities, or building a healthy body, it is an allegory over life itself. In other words, sport may interrogate existential questions, such as why or what it means to exist. What may be at stake, then, is, on the one hand, the disarticulation of elite sport from sport as a popular practice, to unhook the supposedly necessary connection between sport and nations, and, on the other, the re-articulation of sport with, say, the domains of the political and aesthetic. If sport interrogates questions of existence, "the cult of health may be a deception as to the reality of death. [...] If we stay healthy, we stay alive, and that should be our primary concern. In this view, life is identical to the meaning of life" (Møller 1999: 122).<sup>94</sup>

If sport derives its meaning, not by way of some ethical prescription, but through an aesthetic value, then it may be that this value is not properly located neither in the militaristic, leisurely, or authentic articulations of sport. To critics like Elias and Dunning, it is the

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<sup>94</sup> "Sundhedsdyrkelsen [kan] være en måde at belyve dødens realitet på. [...] Holder man sig sund, holder man sig i live, og det er det primære. Livet er i dette perspektiv identisk med livets mening" (my translation).

Aristotelian drama's notion of catharsis, or the cleansing of the audience by arousing in them feelings of fear and pity, which is the defining component of sport's aesthetic function in society.<sup>95</sup> Bertolt Brecht notes that drama aiming to produce catharsis enables the audience to go back to their daily chores as a result and prevent the spectator from "readily adopting a critical attitude to the things depicted, i.e. prevents him more effectively the better the art functions" (1995: entry 17 Oct 1940). Møller suggests that we instead consider the predominant aesthetic value of sport to be associated with expressions of excess, that is, as ways to negotiate death as life's existential condition, since "it is *expenditure* – waste, loss, and excessive enjoyment – which is the actual productive force of culture" (1999: 108).<sup>96</sup>

Mass disseminated sporting events are visual spectacles allegorising the excessive. In this view sport functions not primarily to producing catharsis in an audience, but in symbolizing that which goes beyond – and therefore defies – description. Bourdieu notes that the rite or dance "always contains something *ineffable*" (1977: 2), which in his view, signifies that sport, considered as rituals or communicative endeavours, includes a pre-symbolic component. Based on studies of ritualistic societies, George Bataille suggests that it is "organized transgression, together with prohibition, which defines social life" (1996: 70). Transgression, or the excessive, should be considered

a complement to the profane world, [since] the worlds of the *profane* and the *holy* constitute society together, or successively, as its two complimentary forms. The *profane* world is the world of prohibitions. The *holy* world

<sup>95</sup> Within its specific setting sport, like other leisure pursuits, can evoke through its design a special kind of tension, a pleasurable excitement, thus allowing to flow more freely. It can help to loosen, perhaps to free, stress-tensions. The setting of sport, like that of many other leisure-pursuits, is designed to move, to stir the emotions, a well-tempered excitement without the risks and tensions usually connected with excitement in other life-situations, a 'mimetic' excitement which can be enjoyed and which may have a liberating, cathartic effect, even though the emotional resonance to the imaginary design contains, as it usually does, elements of anxiety, fear – or despair. (Elias and Dunning 1986: 48-49)

<sup>96</sup> "Det [er] *udgiften* – ødselheden, tabet og den excessive nydelse – der i egentlig forstand skaber kultur" (my translation).

emerges through limited transgressions. It is the world of parties, rulers and gods. (1996: 72-73)

With the industrial revolution, the world of the sacred was increasingly subordinated to the profane, as bourgeois values of accumulation and acquisition were constructed in opposition to the French nobility's overindulgences. Expenditure, expressed through waste, loss and excess, offers a hatchway beyond the utilitarian and acquisitive attitude of the bourgeoisie. As Bataille notes, "the only obvious and concrete distinction between prohibition and transcendence are of an economic nature. The prohibition relates to work, and work is productive: during *profane* time, reserved for work, society accumulates resource, and consumption is reduced to the minimum requirement for production. The days of celebration represents *sacred* time" (1996: 70). With the logic of accumulation, then, it is precisely lack and insufficiency that needs to be overcome, and sport may represent an arena where there is no scarcity, where the body, as it were, spills over itself and becomes uncontainable and excessive.

Disarticulating sport from its preferred meanings – as harbinger of military discipline, purveyor of a gentlemanly code of conduct, and inculcator of a morality of health – facilitates an articulation of sport with aesthetic values, and not necessarily in association with the cathartic ideals of the Aristotelian drama. A subordinate reading, then, may entail a perversion of the very concept of elite sport with its attendant moralities. Slavoj Žižek notes that, while the neurotic acknowledges the Law "in order to occasionally take enjoyment in its transgressions (masturbation, theft, etc.), and thus obtains satisfaction by snatching back from the Other part of the stolen *jouissance*," the pervert seeks to establish the Law, as when the proverbial male masochist "gains satisfaction from the very obscenity of the gesture of installing the rule of Law – that is, out of 'castration'" (1999 "Fantasy": 117). Perversion, in

this sense, means a reinstallment of the Law, or a rearticulation of key terms, such as sport or nation, with subordinated signifiers. Perhaps equally significant illustrations of this kind of elision are cases where the term nation is rearticulated, such in the concept of a sporting nation, queer nation, or, as in the Norwegian composition "We are also a nation, we who are but an *alen* of height," i.e. a nation of children, where "nation" is radically delinked from its Latin root *natio* (to be born), which again may be constitutive of new political subjectivities. In these inscriptions, "nation" simply signifies community.

"Fair play" prescribes practitioners to maintain their rôle distance to the game. Play beyond such distance is excessive and, according to the dominant political philosophy of sport, must be contained. Paradoxically, however, such involvement may constitute precisely what Bourdieu refers to as *illusio*, or the recognition that one is "invested, taken in and by the game" (Wacquant and Bourdieu 1992: 116). To engage in sport, and particularly as a professional athlete, one must recognize "a specific form of interest, a specific illusion, as tacit recognition of the value of the stakes of the game as practical mastery of its rules" (1992: 117). It is *illusio* which produces the confusion in spectators, causing us to concentrate on the "apparent producer – painter, composer, writer – and prevents us asking who created this 'creator' and the magic power of transubstantiation with which the 'creator' is endowed" (1996: 167). In order to uncover the illusion – to objectify the fantasmatic – it is necessary to first have experienced and have been taken in by the excessive aspect of sport. Only then are we in a position to distinguish the gentle from the untrained, the authentic from the contrived.

### **Freedom and the excessive**

In his late writings on sexuality Foucault considered the subject of desire as the latest in a series of "sorrowful subjects" inaugurated by early Christianity and becoming dominant with



the advent of bourgeois morality. This subject are characterised by a founding lack – a lapse, a missing fullness – and are constituted so as to never be fully able to close this gap. In Christian ethics of sexuality this takes the form of a double movement.

First, there is the task of clearing up all the illusions, temptations and seductions which can occur in the mind, and discovering the reality of what is going on within ourselves. Second, one has to get free from any attachment to this self, not because the self is an illusion, but because the self is much too real. The more we discover the truth about ourselves, the more we have to renounce ourselves. ... That is what we could call the spiral of truth formulation and reality renouncement which is at the heart of the Christian techniques of the self. (1999: 183)

The growing scientific interest in desire serves as a force of power to elicit obedience and consent. It is a subject that is founded on "the subjugating coordinates of self-negation and self-deciphering" (Bove). However, to Foucault pleasure can be enlisted as a site of resistance – of "responding claims and affirmations, those of one's own body" – against power. When Foucault juxtaposes the increasing interest in (the illusory character of) desire with a disappearance of pleasure from philosophical debate, this is an index of his shift in emphasis from "processes of liberation" to "practices of freedom" (Bove). While liberation in certain theologies may mean emancipation from desire itself, freedom is constitutive of power. What we have to do with here is not so much a subject that is unaware of its own bondage and inauthentic relation to itself – and which needs to be liberated from its shackles and returned to state of singular unity with its prelapsarian state – as with a subject that is *already free*. This is not a subject that needs to be liberated from "false consciousness," as much as it is already making use of "the possibilities intrinsic to power relations themselves" (Bove).

There is an ethical concern in Foucault's writing on the subject that implies a critique of an understanding of the self as always lacking, always being in a state of non-fulfilment and absence, and suggests to put in its place a subject that enjoys. There is, however, a

difference in the understanding of the terms desire and enjoyment in Foucault and the psychoanalysts Jacques Lacan's work. Desire, with its association to lack, separation and alienation, enables pleasure to be scientised and submitted to what Freud referred to as the pleasure principle: a principle that has as its purpose to *limit* enjoyment. Foucault takes as his example as story from St. Francois de Sales where an elephant is taken as the most appropriate metaphor for human sexuality, as it "couples not, but from three years to three years" (1999: 183). It is as a kind of dictum to enjoy as little as possible that power lodges itself in the body, and it is against such a dictum that subjects constantly try to transgress the prohibition – castration – of her or his enjoyment. It is against this understanding of desire as a limiting agent that Foucault suggested pleasure be mobilised.

### III From production to reception

While the previous part was concerned with how and what kind of body is produced through the national-sports nexus through school sports and elite events, this section deals with how such events are made meaningful in subjects. Bourdieu perceived sports as inculcating a form of belief in their practitioners (see chapter 3 above for a further discussion on naturalisation, *dressage* and *illusio*). Nationalist discourses and the epic, national body are automatised and made to appear natural through sports. However, the open-ended character of signification discussed in chapter 2 means that beneath the dominant nationalist anchorage of such events other articulations are possible. Here I suggest that there is a potential excess of meaning in spectacular sports that enables such events to become potential sites of subjective truth: beyond the barren, fantasmatic character of spectacular sports one may come to interrogate the notion that spectacular sports are something else than a game, and what this means for the subject's "truth of desire", or what Slavoj Žižek calls "'acephalic,' non-subjectivized knowledge" (Žižek, "Desire").

In chapter 8 I claim that there is a limit to Bourdieu's theory of mass mediated sport: while Bourdieu claims that such mass spectacles render the subject increasingly passive, this view disregards the active component in the making of meaning discussed in chapter 2 above. The insight into the way sports produce a silent language in the encounter between teacher and performer is overlooked by Bourdieu in the moment of televised sports events. However, may not this wordless language be enlisted to produce meanings that are unofficial and remain "below" the level of explicit articulation, so that there is a potential activity in watching sports that is as secretive as it is visceral: a twitch in the leg when a favoured player attempts a difficult shot at the goal, a desire to push forward along with a charging striker.

## 7. Dressage and *illusio*: Desire and spectacular sport

It is an “acephalic,” non-subjectivized knowledge. Although (or, rather, for the very reason that) it is a kind of “Thou art that!” which articulates the very kernel of the subject’s being, its assumption desubjectivizes me, i.e., I can only assume my fundamental fantasy insofar as I undergo what Lacan calls “subjective destitution.” (Žižek “Desire”)

Spectacular sport frames the subject in a national, epic world of fathers, firsts and bests (see chapters 4 and 5 above). By narrating our fundamental fantasies, sport regulates desire through allegories of the excessive body, phantasms of peak moments and phallic dominance, and a symbolic conquest of youth, women and the working population. May the subject nevertheless experience a kind of subjective destitution from sports and what may be the effects of such an experience? Can televised football induce in the viewer a recognition of what Bourdieu called the *illusio* of social orchestration?<sup>97</sup>

It is to a large extent the body which is the location and vehicle for understanding and communication in sports, and it may have been this aspect of popular games that made them suitable for codification and autonomisation by the élite at the end of the nineteenth century (Bourdieu, “Program” 160, 161; “Sports fan” 342).<sup>98</sup> When sports return to the people in the form of mass dispersed spectacles, they are enmeshed in structures that serve to frame their meaning and constitution as objects of desire (“Sports fan” 346). In this sense, religious and social investments in popular games in pre-capitalist societies find their analogies in the way elite sports events are invested with desire, and the manner in which desire is regulated and managed through visual narratives.

Elite sports events produced for the masses may be approached as machines or engines

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<sup>97</sup> See chapter 3 for a fuller discussion of the term *illusio*. The term is also central to the remarks in the conclusion.

<sup>98</sup> Chapter 3 and 8 offers more detailed analysis of these aspects of Bourdieu's conceptual apparatus and his view on elite sports.

that mediate desire, in the sense that they serve to exhibit the Lacanian “object a”. Desire in Lacan is “metonymical, it shifts from one object to another” (Žižek “Desire”), while object a endows desire with a certain formal frame of consistency. Object a, then, is not what we desire, but the cause of desire, or the image or representation that induces desire in the subject. Since desire is metonymical, it makes little sense to declare some absolute or singular representation as the cause or object of desire. Rather, spectacular sports serve particularly well as a desire engine precisely because of the endless shifts in mediations that on the surface appear strikingly standardised. On the other hand, the gaze of the spectator on the couch, “bereft of all practical competency and who cares more about the extrinsic aspects of practice, such as the result, the victory” (Bourdieu, “Program” 160), elucidates the lack which is contained by the image, since the spectator must always remain on the hither side of the screen onto which the image is transmitted.<sup>99</sup>

The analogy with the child’s trauma of experiencing its own reflection in a mirror, the effect of the so-called “mirror stage,” is striking.<sup>100</sup> Only on realising that it can never be as whole or sutured as its appearance in the mirror can the child experience the kind of paranoid alienation or imaginary servitude that is characteristic of the formation of a social I (Lacan, “Mirror stage” 4-7). Through an experience of the mediated image as a misapprehension of his desire the spectator of elite sports events may recognise the ways in which his or her gaze and the mediated image serve to manage and regulate his or her fantasies. As the mirror stage inaugurates a fictional agency of the ego, so does the gaze enable the kind of trauma by which I may realise that I can never fully be myself, and the fantasies on which I rely for the

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<sup>99</sup> However, see the critique of Bourdieu’s notion of a subject rendered passive by spectacular sports in chapter 8 and a fuller discussion of representational theories in chapter 2.

<sup>100</sup> The terms mirror stage and mirror theory are applicable to different concepts and events. While the former describes the entry of the child into the symbolic order, and – by extension – the variety of possible relations between the subject and a social context, the latter is descriptive of a certain theory of meaning, namely that the world of signs represent or *stand in for* a world that is represented, and that there is no mediating event that intervenes between these two worlds.

constitution of my desire are structured misapprehensions. The supplement, as it were, to the visually repetitive character of elite sports events may be that they narrate our fundamental fantasies – these little pieces of imagination by which we can gain access to reality (Žižek 1999 "Fantasy": 104-124).

Since these fantasies are produced both through the gaze of the spectator and the images that are mediated to him or her, the metonymical shifts in objects onto which the spectator's desire is transferred occurs both on the retina and on the television screen. These fundamental fantasies are manufactured by the way we observe, and through investments of desire in the objects that appear on the screen. However, even if desire is metonymical, these minute shifts in images that are invested with desire are structured both in the moment of production – by nation states, sports organisations, television producers, manufacturers of sporting equipment, and so on – and in the moment of reception, i.e., in and through the gaze. What object *a*, the cause of desire, confers on the subject is a formal frame of consistency, and this frame is further reinforced through the way visual narratives are structured and ordered in generic formats or frames. In other words, what is at stake is to identify the specific techniques and modalities by which desire becomes habituated and productive of subjects with embodied beliefs in an identity between the cause and object of their desire.

### **The excessive body**

Representations of peak events in mass mediated sports are consistently framed as allegories of the excessive body, and of a state in which there is no lack or scarcity. Analogously to hard-core pornography, elite sports mediate visual signs of desire. The innumerable repetitions of the same record breaking event, spectacular goal or nationalist feast share characteristics with the “repeatedly inflated, ‘spending’ penis” of hard-core pornography’s “money shot”

(Williams 108). These images take the shape of a Lacanian object a, endowing desire with a certain formal consistency. Peak events in mass mediated sports are produced in a structured way, and organised through a whole set of technologies to ensure their reproduction in slightly shifting representations while maintaining their formal or generic coherence.

The training machine to which all elite athletes submit is organised as a disciplinary regime. It is this form of discipline that “‘makes’ individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise” (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 170). Its instruments of dominance – hierarchical observation, normalising judgement, and their combination in the examination – serve at every moment to place “individuals in a field of surveillance” in order to homogenise, “capture and fix them” (ibid. 189). This disciplinary regime and its meticulous attention to detail in each performer produces modern subjects as individuals, inaugurating “the man of modern humanism” (ibid. 141). This notion of the individual posits a moral, or knowing, agent “as an autonomous sovereign subject” (Schildrick 152) whose acts are detached from any particular context and from other actors (ibid. 150). In other words, it is an atomistic disciplinary regime that manufactures athletes as individual specimens.

Hence, while on the surface it may appear as if each record breaking event or spectacular goal stands out in its own singularity, these moments are carefully manufactured by submitting athletes to a Fordist training machine engineered to satisfy the demands of an individualising desire engine. A Fordist mode of production, with its characteristic assembly line model, is designed to mass produce standardised and pre-defined products, and its application to athletes serves to engineer performers that can fulfil and embody de Coubertin’s Olympic ideals, “higher, stronger, faster”. Far from coincidental, the peak moments of elite sporting events are carefully planned and meticulously organised to ensure the reproduction

of visual spectacles that may generate and order desire in spectators.

Nationalism may be perceived as a form or genre onto which mass disseminated sports events, such as the Olympic Games or the Football World Cup, are grafted. Nations are imagined as communities that “loom out of an immemorial past, and [...] glide into a limitless future” (Anderson, *Imagined Communities* 11-12), and it is perhaps their “philosophical poverty” (ibid. 5) that urges them to seek justification in an epic world of originary myths and founding fathers. “The world of the epic is the national heroic past: it is a world of ‘beginnings’ and ‘peak times’ in the national history, a world of fathers and of founders of families, a world of ‘firsts’ and ‘bests’” (Bakhtin 13).<sup>101</sup> Mass disseminated sports events are dominantly framed by the epic genre which provides a coherence mechanism for meaning and signification (Barthes 74). The way peak moments of elite sports events are narratively framed serves to recycle the notion of founding national moments and construct performers as national subjects.<sup>102</sup> Performers are manufactured to produce new records and championships in order to fortify the notion of national founders, firsts and bests. The Fordist training machine, then, serves to satisfy the demands of nationalist narratives under state custodianship, providing images that can reflect a sutured national past of peak moments (Bakhtin 30). The epic genre formally frames the minute metonymical shifts in images spectators invest with desire.

## Phantasms

Sports organisations such as FIFA, the international football body, and IOC, the International Olympic Committee, followed nation states in their foundational history and provide stories

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<sup>101</sup> See also the discussion of the epic in chapter 5 and a fuller treatment of nationalism in chapter 4.

<sup>102</sup> Even if nationalism has tended to hegemonise the meaning of elite sports, such subjectivities may interfere with sports performance. To Bruce Lee, a “martial artist is firstly a man, which is ourselves: nationalities has [sic] nothing to do in martial art” (p. 5).



that have generic relations to nationalism. The IOC narrative constructs Pierre de Coubertin as its founding father and restorer of the ancient Olympic Games (Simonovic 3), which, in effect, locates the ancient games in an absolutely valorised past (Bakhtin 15) and provides a mould for apprehension of each Olympic feat and record breaking event. The current version of the Olympic Games is seen as a reflection of the ancient games, and the originary myth of the games constructs it as rooted in European soil. Analogous to nationalist narratives and their supposedly European forebears (Alter 19; Kamenka 3), international sports organisations and their foundational stories belong “to a whole system of ‘phantasms,’ to a certain representation of nature, life, history, religion, law,” constituting them as a kind of “‘delivery of arms’ [...] of European exportation” (Derrida, “Racism’s last word.” 295). These international organisations serve as custodians of the code, political philosophy, history of records, and other paraphernalia that define sports as fields of cultural production relatively autonomous to the field of class relations (Bourdieu “Sports fan” 341-343). The stake in the autonomisation of sports by a social élite in English public schools was a “monopolistic capacity to impose the legitimate definition of sporting practice” (Bourdieu “Sports fan” 344). When sports return as visual spectacles these organisations and their symbols are associated with peak moments, serving to invest them with desire in spectators.

The diffusion of elite sports through television entails that its production is regulated by the demands of the mass media and their consumers, advertisers and owners. The increasing competition between the established organisation and major corporate interests over sports has generated conflicts concerning the ways in which peak moments can be produced most efficiently, which, in one case, resulted in the formation of an Inter-European Champions’ League in football within the bounds of the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA).<sup>103</sup> Furthermore, media interests continue to push for changes in the

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<sup>103</sup> Per Ravn Omdahl, then-President of UEFA, notes that in the late 1990s, when “powerful media

codes of sports to make them more attractive to television advertisers.<sup>104</sup> Manufacturers of sports equipment and the media complex have found different avenues of challenging the current dominance of FIFA. In commercials repeatedly aired during the 2002 Football World Cup, a multinational corporation gathered a host of players with individual sponsorship contracts to play a “friendly” game – as two teams both playing for the same company. In such a way, the corporation suggested ownership of the game itself, dissolving the opposition between the two teams on a corporate level. It is “commercial imperatives” that “drive the production” of televised images.<sup>105</sup> “‘Watching’ sports is one of the few transgenerational experiences that men and boys, fathers and sons, still share in the post-Fordian economy. [...] The images of manly character that boys and men consume in sports media become embodied by star athletes who reflect and reinforce men’s collective power over women.” (Sabo and Jansen 207; 205). Since the demand that the commercial media makes of sports is that they deliver viewers or consumers to advertisers, athletes represent “the peak performance of manly youth”, transcending “the ordinary constraints of embodiment and mortality” (ibid. 203). It is in the form of spectacular goals, record breaking events and other peak moments that sports are coded as “responsive” to a “target market” (ibid. 207).

### **Containing desire**

In this system of mediated consumption the spectator on the couch represents a potential consumer. The work of sports in reproducing the structures of dominance in the field of class

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interests joined some of the major teams and wanted to break away” from UEFA and establish their own league, the club teams were persuaded to stay by UEFA’s proposal of a new Inter-European league. The following year another group made an attempt to sever ties with UEFA. This time the group consisted of a “mix of Spanish Pay-per-view, Berlusconi, German Kirch, Murdoch” and others. Omdahl estimates that such break away attempts constitute a “threat which football will have to confront for many years ahead. We are particularly concerned with the linkage between the media, ownership of football clubs, and control of TV distribution.” (p. 35).

<sup>104</sup> Before the 1994 Football World Cup, a proposal to cut each half of the game in two was tabled, which would have the effect of dividing the game into four periods of 20 minutes, “so that there would be more time for commercials” in televised versions of football events (Pedersen 50).

<sup>105</sup> See also the discussion on masculinities in chapter 5.

relations is to provide images that can deliver consumers to advertisers. Since the market for spectacular sports is constructed as demanding events that can reproduce patterns of masculine domination, the mass media strives to provide recurring instances of peak performances of manly youth transcending the body and the constraints of mortality. These spectacular moments are framed within the epic genre, representing a world of “peaks”, “firsts” and “bests”, and it is this narrative form which provides coherence to the foundational stories of nations and sports organisations, or the system of “European ‘phantasms’” that are invested with desire through their mediation in elite sports events. Performers are carefully manufactured by an individualising training machine to produce the record breaking events, spectacular goals and nationalist feats required to feed a desire engine with innumerable minutely shifting repetitions that can substitute or stand in for a Lacanian object *a*, conferring a formal frame of consistency to desire in spectators. It is in this sense that spectacular sports narrate the fundamental, or deep-seated, fantasies that must remain a screen’s width beyond the grasp of the viewer.

This desire engine constructs performance as a drive for knowledge, manufacturing performers that can “push the envelope”. They should run faster, jump higher, have more physical strength than any human before them, and these peak performances are equipped with measures that are constructed as objective. The scientific training machine producing these performers submits to this drive for knowledge “heedless of cost – satisfaction is here provided by knowledge itself –” thus reinscribing “this inexorable drive-progress of science which knows of no inherent limitation” (Žižek, “Desire”). Perhaps the desire engine of spectacular sports and its system of phantasms is produced by and productive of a “European upbringing and perception of society” that transforms “young people – regardless of their social position – either to dolls wrapped in cotton or to withered, chronically morose

machines for industry or ‘business’” (Reich 149).<sup>106</sup> Hence, the peak events of elite sports serve both to trigger and contain desire in audiences, working at every moment as a technology to manage the spectators of mass mediated sports.

The desire engine of spectacular sports establishes boundaries for desire through procedures of containment and discourses of contamination. Sports participate in a “symbolic conquest of youth”, with the “aim of ensuring complete and continuous containment of the working population” (Bourdieu “Sports fan” 348), and, as part of an officialising “law and order” ideology, serve as a guard and bulwark against social outsiders, hooligans, criminals, drug addicts, and so on (Bennett 295-303). Sports operate a typology which demarcates the healthy and orderly inside from that which belongs on the outside. For instance, the gentlemanly code of “fair play”, inherited from the political philosophy developed during sports’ phase of appropriation by the social élite in the late nineteenth century and autonomisation from the field of class relations, operates an interdiction against doping, which, in effect, excludes the rank of those who are willing to take their profession seriously enough to consider “gambling with the body itself” while privileging the “macrobiotic cult of health” associated with the new bourgeoisie (Bourdieu “Sports fan”: 354; Tamburrini 202-204). The ban on doping, establishing a typology of legal and prohibited drugs, declares that “one must respect a norm, one must not cross a line of demarcation, one must not risk impunity, anomaly or monstrosity” (Derrida, “The law of genre” 224-225).

The desire engine of spectacular sports feeds images and visual narratives to those fundamental fantasies that constitute and reproduce the pattern of domination in the field of class relations, and it is productive of fantasies that are embodied in subjects as structured propensities of the gaze. Spectacular sports contribute to the production of subjects that rely

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<sup>106</sup> “Men vår europeiske samfunnsforestilling og –oppdragelse har forvandlet de unge – uavhengig av deres samfunnsmessige stilling – enten til dukker intullet i vann eller til uttørrede, kronisk gretne maskiner for industrien eller ‘næringslivet’” (my translation).

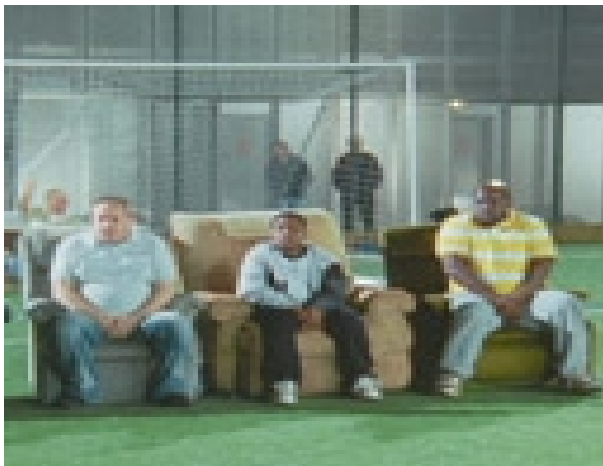
on these minutely shifting mediations of peak events for their constitution and who identify with them to the extent that they mistake the cause for the object of desire. However, the gaze may enable an experience of the lack contained in the image, which may give access to the kind of non-subjectivised, or acephalic, knowledge located at the “kernel of human structure” (Reich 171).<sup>107</sup> This knowledge is prior to reason and its coating of civilised behaviour, and before those fundamental fantasies that are constitutive of subjects. Might the kind of trauma or “subjective destitution” brought about by the loss of a fundamental fantasy, or by the apprehension of these visual narratives as mistaken objects of desire, facilitate the experience of desire as always mediatised, and give rise to the truth effects of “full speech”, or “speech in which subjective truth reverberates” (Žižek, “Desire”)? May we through such an experience “break the constraints of fantasy and enter the terrifying, violent domain of pre-synthetic imagination, the domain in which *disjecta membra* float around, not yet unified and ‘domesticated’ by the intervention of a homogenizing fantasmatic frame” (Žižek, “The Spectre of Ideology” 122)?

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<sup>107</sup> “Dette tredje og siste laget – som utgjør den menneskelige strukturs *biologiske kjerne* – er ubevisst og fryktet” (my translation).

### **8. The limits of Bourdieu: A passive subject?**

There's something apologetic about mass mediated sport spectacles. In 2007, the European Commission and the European Football Union, UEFA, broadcast an advertisement entitled "Get out of your armchair" as an accompaniment to the season's Champion League football games (Sweeney). The advertisement was aired more than two thousand times, as if to remind viewers that the real purpose of televising this game is not primarily so that you should enjoy 90 minutes of top international football, but to encourage you to get out of the armchair, lose a few pounds, and participate in the European-wide campaign on obesity.



*Fig. 8: UEFA armchair advertisement*

Just watching the game for the love of it does not seem to be enough. Consider an analogy from the art world. If we were to watch international opera or ballet, we may want to sing and dance afterwards, but would our own singing and dancing be the primary purpose of us watching the show? There does not seem to be need to justify broadcasting ballet or opera via public service television with its possible health benefits. While the high arts aspire to bring audiences to experience the sublime, football can hope for little more than to entertain.

Is not this difference a product of the specific character of its audiences rather than some intrinsic aspect of the practice itself? If so, the corollary would seem to be that experiences that we associate with the high arts might be produced by a popular cultural expression such as mass mediated football.

Indeed, the matrix we make use of when we approach a cultural expression – our preconception of whether the current expression is high art or a form of popular culture – may be the very cause of our experience of the sublime or the entertaining.<sup>108</sup> The difference in broadcasting environment between football and ballet may be due to the fact that while the former is associated with the masses, the latter is primarily consumed by the cultured and well to do of society. Those who enjoy ballet may not need cultivation. Nowhere is the difference in social capital between these two cultural forms expressed more succinctly than in the writing of Pierre Bourdieu. Variations in taste give expression to socio-economic and sexual differences as well as to class aspirations. Perhaps this dichotomy is the productive moment behind our perception of football in contrast to ballet: low culture against high culture, the masses against the cultivated, those who need to be brought up in contrast to those who are already erect.

Our purpose here is to investigate Bourdieu's view on mass mediated sport spectacles, with a particular consideration of football. While Bourdieu assumes a particular historical development in sports, we ask whether he disregards the specificity of modern elite sports as mediated, and the consequences this may have for experiences of the game. Are Bourdieu's analytical tools predisposing him towards a certain elitism when recording the effects of mediated sports on those who watch them, and does his normative view on modern sport

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<sup>108</sup> Consider Duchamp's dada-ist work *The Fountain*: It becomes a sculpture and available to sublimation only once it enters the high-art context of the modern museum. In this work of art Duchamp demonstrates how it is the context rather than some intrinsic character to the artwork that determines our experience of the sublime as opposed to the everyday.

spectacles bar him from appreciating those pleasures we may find in an apparently passive consumption of televised sports?

In his writing on sports history Pierre Bourdieu noted that those activities we today refer to as sports tend to have a common trajectory: Born of vulgar games by and for the common folk, these activities were disconnected from their religious and bodily purposes and reinserted into a context where they could function as a physical art-for-art's sake for the pupils of public schools in nineteenth-century Britain ("Sports fan": 342-343).<sup>109</sup> Sports claimed their cultural autonomy by refashioning these games in accordance with the mechanisms of high modernity: rationalisation, calculability, predictability and a corpus of rules which turned common games into activities with a distinct distance from material interest.

They were then returned to the masses, but now as spectacles performed by professionals and for consumers with an ever-diminishing ability to grasp the necessities associated with playing the game produced for them ("Sports fan" 344). At this point they should perhaps be considered less as games than as plays that produce a cathartic effect in order to maintain a social equilibrium.<sup>110</sup> Sports appear as highly scripted performances manufactured to be consumed by audiences whose illiteracy in elite sports performance reduces their interest to those extrinsic aspects of games associated primarily with the gains of winning or losing.

## **The space of sports**

In *Distinction*, Bourdieu notes how those cultural forms that have achieved a high degree of

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<sup>109</sup> See also the discussion of Bourdieu's view on sport and his field theory in chapter 3.

<sup>110</sup> To Elias and Dunning it is its cathartic element that is the defining component in sport's aesthetic role in society (pp. 48-49). Bertolt Brecht noted that the Aristotelian drama, aiming to produce catharsis, enables audiences to go back to their daily chores as a result of the cleansing process, preventing them from "readily adopting a critical attitude to the things depicted, i.e. prevents him more effectively the better the art functions" (entry 17 October 1940).



autonomy from the economic field tend to favour distance between the artwork and the viewer, in accordance with Kant's aesthetics of disinterest. On approaching these kinds of cultural artefacts – ballet, opera, modern sculpture, and so forth – we are expected to maintain our distance and not get too involved in the object. These forms of aesthetic production come with a particular cultural competence: a pure gaze acquired through a kind of implicit learning, enabling the viewer to sift out all things that may serve to rouse the kinds of passions and emotions “ordinary” people experience in their “ordinary” existence (Bourdieu, *Distinction* 48-49).<sup>111</sup> It is for these reasons that the ability to appreciate high art, or objects made for the field of limited cultural production, betrays the viewer. The ability to recognise these objects as artworks tacitly identifies the viewer as someone who has acquired the codes of cultural competence associated with the cultural elite.

It is here that we find the crux in Bourdieu's dictum that the logic of the cultural field is that of the economic field inverted. The higher degree of autonomy from the economic field, the more symbolic capital we associate with the art form: the more distinctive the kind of recognition offered to those who associate with it. For instance, while the production of ballet is far more autonomous from the economic field than football – it is often supported by state subsidies and taught through governmental programmes – it also confers far more symbolic capital on those who have the ability to appreciate its practice. Football is more ingrained in the economic field, but also awards little symbolic capital to its practitioners and spectators. The logic seems to be that the fewer who appreciate and practice a cultural form, the more symbolic capital it commands.

Football offers little symbolic capital, but may reward elite practitioners with considerable economic gain, embedded as the sport is within the field of economic production. It is regarded as the world's most popular sport, and the 2002 World Cup final had

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<sup>111</sup> Quotes from *Distinction* refer to the Norwegian 1995 translation.

1.1 billion viewers, according to FIFA (Harris). Bourdieu distinguishes between cultural practices in large- and small-scale production (“Field” 38; *The Rules of Art* 124). While ballet and some less popular sports, such as aikido and golf, may on occasion be made available to wider audiences, none of them has an audience on the same scale as football. Consequently, having an association with practices in the field of small-scale cultural production offers a higher distinctive value than an association with a mass-produced spectacle such as football. Bodily practices such as ballet, aikido and golf are generally more autonomous of the economic field.

There is a further reason why sports such as golf and aikido have a preferred status among the petty bourgeoisie. In the system of preferences with regards to sport, the determining element is “the degree of engagement of the body” (Bourdieu, “Program” 157). The most distinctive value is bestowed on sports that euphemise violence to the highest degree, so that, in golf, distance is created “by the very logic of a confrontation which excludes all direct contact, even through a ball” (ibid. 158). The distinction accorded to golf over football is a product of a threefold difference: There is a significant difference with regard to the characteristics of those who practice it; they can be distinguished by taking account of their location within the field of cultural production; and they can be delineated from each other by accounting for inherent characteristics, specifically their euphemisation of violence.

The Kantian distance to the object appears to offer an approach to the body that fits better with the more distinctive practices. In Bourdieu’s sociology sports are converted from vulgar games to sports by adopting the function as a physical art-for-art’s sake for the well to do. Detached from their religious and bodily purposes sports were appropriated as bodily exercises that aimed to instil virtues in future leaders (“Sports fan”: 343). One must at all

times remain aloof and composed, both when participating in the game and when one plays the role of spectator. Yet there is a distinct difference between the audiences of golf and tennis, on the one hand, and football, on the other. In the latter sport we find audiences that lose their composure and allow their feelings to be agitated.

### **Struggle over definitions**

What is at stake in modern sports is something far more than notions of belonging and identity. We could put it this way: While we ordinarily assume that the rousing of emotions associated with mass mediated spectacles such as sport triggers a sense of belonging in the audience, it may be that this emotional excitement causes spectators to slip out of consciousness, let their guard down, and forget “who they are”, i.e. their identity, even if just for a moment. By forgetting that the game is merely an illusion, and becoming involved, audiences are made available to social orchestration.<sup>112</sup> Sports constitute attempts to assert a “monopolistic capacity to impose the legitimate definition of sporting practice and of the legitimate function of sporting activity” (Bourdieu “Sports fan” 344). They represent struggles over the definition of the legitimate body and the legitimate use of the body. When popular sports are relegated from practice to spectacles on television these struggles include not only the uses of bodies but also the meaning and purpose of physical activity, even when undertaken by others.

There is something insidious about mass mediated sport spectacles in Bourdieu’s writing. He notes that “sports shows encouraged by television create more and more spectators who lack all practical competence and pay attention only to the extrinsic aspects of practice, such as the result, the victory” (1988: 160). As popular games are turned into professional events, audiences are alienated from the pastimes they themselves made. Mass

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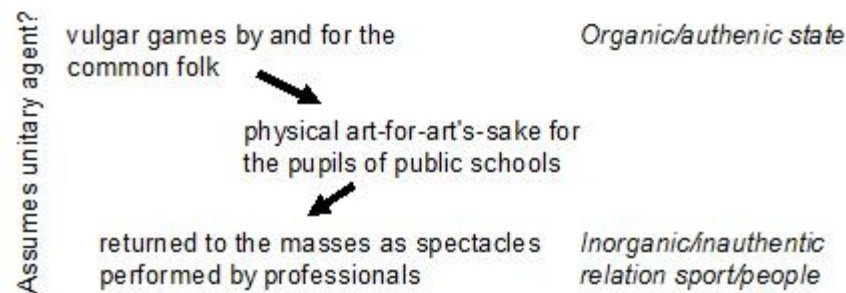
<sup>112</sup> See also the discussions in chapters 4-6 on the production of nationally codified bodies through sport.

mediated sports reinforce social orchestration through bodily and collective mimesis (ibid. 167).

In this sense mass mediated sports are truly cathartic, like plays that arouse pity and fear in order to cleanse audiences of those passions. Consider George Orwell's "Two Minute Hate":

The Hate rose to its climax. ... At this moment the entire group of people broke into a deep, slow, rhythmical chant of 'B-B! ...B-B!' – over and over again, ... For perhaps as much as thirty seconds they kept it up. It was a refrain that was often heard in moments of overwhelming emotion. Partly it was a sort of hymn to the wisdom and majesty of Big Brother, but still more it was an act of self-hypnosis, a deliberate drowning of consciousness by means of rhythmic noise.

Sport spectacles allow audiences to release their libidinal energy, or feelings of pity and fear, as their team of association wins or loses the competition. Perhaps it is this character of hypnosis or drowning of consciousness that Bourdieu had in mind when he considered that modern sport spectacles produce audiences without any practical competence in the game. As a narrative, modern sports appear to provide the perfect supplement to liberal capitalism by providing stories of global competition circumscribed by a supposedly equal investment of power and opportunities in those who participate. It is the ideological character of this narrative and the increasing monopolisation of the power to define the legitimate body and legitimate uses of the body that is hidden from the consciousness of spectators by pacifying and, in Orwell's words, hypnotising them.



*Fig. 9: Historical development of sports in Bourdieu.*

Nevertheless, there are two problematic assumptions behind Bourdieu's argument. First, does he not take for granted that there is a unity over a vast period of time to a popular agent when he claims that spectators are "reduced to passive understanding" and that are "less and less capable of that understanding which comes through practice" (1988: 160)? For instance, remarking on the "widening ... gap between professionals and amateurs" Bourdieu notes that in dance, its constitution as a relatively autonomous field of cultural production for professionals is accompanied by a "dispossession of the profane, who are ... reduced to the role of spectators" (ibid.). However, we cannot assume that it is *the same* dancers who were practitioners in its state as a vulgar form and who are sidelined as spectators more than a hundred years later. Bourdieu's view appears nostalgic, looking back to a supposedly organic state of wholeness when there was no separation between the people and their cultural forms. We are left to assume such as state, since while the modern, contemporary version of dance is explicated to a considerable extent, we are given only cursory hints at the ritual function of dance in its vulgar form.

In opposition to village dancing, often associated with ritual functions, courtly dance, which becomes a spectacle, presupposes specific forms of knowledge (one has to know the beat and the steps), and thus requires dancing masters inclined to

emphasize technical virtuosity and to perform a work of exegesis and codification; from the nineteenth century onward there appear professional dancers. ... Then, finally, you have a total break between star dancers and spectators who do not practice dance and who are reduced to passive understanding. (ibid.)

If we assume a spectator who has no memory or experience of practising dance, would not the modern star dance event be a wholly different phenomenon from village dancing, requiring alternative tools for analysis, and not some secondary or derived form of an originary or more authentic version of what is essentially the same practice?

Second, the nostalgic aspect of Bourdieu's historical analysis of sports does not appear conducive to a full understanding of the modern sport spectator as active interpreter of mediated events.<sup>113</sup> His analysis rests on the notion that watching television pacifies audiences. Even if the preferred subject in Bourdieu's sociology is an active agent – in contrast to a passive spectator duped to enjoy or suffer his or her own objectification – the questions remain whether we can assume consumption without interpretation, and if interpretation without some kind of active engagement is possible. As Stuart Hall has shown there is always room for alternative interpretations of media texts, and this phenomenon entails that some kind of interpretative activity is required by spectators to make sense of sports. To Hall there are several possible positions for the reader of a text, or a spectator of mediated sports ("Encoding/decoding" 136-138). The spectator may fully share the codes of the event and produce a preferred or dominant reading, in which case the code, or language of transmission, appears transparent. Alternatively, readers and spectators may challenge or reject outright the dominant code, and produce degrees of oppositional or counter-hegemonic readings. However, even a full acceptance of the preferred position in mediated sports requires some kind of interpretative activity on the side of the spectator to make sense of the

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<sup>113</sup> The notion of interpretation as an activity is discussed in greater detail in chapter 2.

event.

Scholars who have taken a more descriptive approach to audiences' experiences challenge Bourdieu's normative and didactic view on mass mediated sports. Precisely because sports constitute struggles over legitimate meanings of bodies and sport spectacles may be seen as important primers for gender socialisation. Through sports talk fathers teach their sons about themes such as discipline, skill, courage, competition, loyalty, fairness, hierarchy and achievement. Sports are sites of male bonding. Here men unite in their common difference to – and perhaps power over – women. Audiences' bodies may be passive to some extent while watching the game, but there is activation of a common imagery of familial patriarchy, mythos of the frontiersman, and a symbolism of the phallus (Sabo and Jansen 204).<sup>114</sup> In order to make sense of media events audiences reach for these narratives and images to structure and interpret their experience.

While the purpose of sport in its officialisation phase was to instil virtue in future leaders by disciplining their bodies in physical exertion, in its popularisation phase virtue is taught on the sidelines of the game and among amateur spectators of professional performers, where elite practitioners now serve as models in a didactic narrative structure. Narratives of sport propose moral stories aimed at boys by offering “an image of manhood to aspire to” (Silvennoinen 2). To Gary Whannel, “the ideological work that is performed through the representation of sport stars is precisely to do with the normalization of hegemonic masculinity and the marginalisation of alternative masculinities” (p. 64). Scripts that emphasise patriarchy, the frontiersman and the phallus come across as highly circumscribed homoerotic, and yet apparently heteronormative, ways of making sense of mass mediated sports.

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<sup>114</sup> There is a fuller discussion of masculinities in sport in chapter 5.

## Unofficial pleasures

While these modes of reception may be dominant, – or, in the language of Stuart Hall, provide the preferred position for the spectator – there may be other ways in which audiences make meaning and draw pleasure from these events.<sup>115</sup> For instance, even if athletics and healthy heterosexual masculinity are popularly equated, the impossibility of controlling the interpretation of mass mediated sport images enables radically different engagements with such events. Brian Pronger mentions that in a gay context a “muscular appearance [which] is meant to deter other men” may come across as attractive and sexually inviting (p. 151). The possibility of a bond between those who appreciate the double entendre of the muscular male body enables a kind of aesthetic community that is unofficial and subordinate, and yet it may provide a highly meaningful way of making sense of mass mediated sports.

Let us consider one comment made on South African television during the transmission of the opening game of the 1998 Football World Cup game between South Africa and France to highlight some of the difficulties associated with arriving at a certain meaning of mediated sport and the complexities involved in measuring the effects of sports as mass mediated spectacles.<sup>116</sup> In a report from a South African reporter located in Marseille prior to the game itself television audiences were shown images of girls of various nationalities dancing in the streets. Comparing the performances the reporter commented on the “Brazilian skirts, the whites of England, [and] the skirts of the South African part was clearly unbelievable stuff” (Fjeld, “Soccer Rites” 401). The preferred reading fails to recognise that the female body provides “a sexual spectacle for consumption” on the sideline of the main event. A counter-hegemonic interpretation would take account of how this

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<sup>115</sup> Bourdieu notes this effect when he admits that “writers’ efforts to control the reception of their own works are always partially doomed to failure (one thinks of Marx’s ‘I am not a Marxist’); if only because the very effect of their work may transform the conditions of its reception” (“Field” 31).

<sup>116</sup> The transmission is the topic of chapter 5.1 and is discussed in detail there.



narrative supports what Jayne Caudwell refers to as the “man-masculine-heterosexual order” of sports (p. 378). The feminine body is established as an ornament to the virile, powerful and productive male body (ibid. 376; Pronger 144). While an oppositional reading would identify the ideological gendered implications of this sports text, Bourdieu’s notion of a duped and pacified spectator renders an audience with little or no room for critical interpretation. On closer examination we discover that not only may spectators reflect on the binary gender codes in this comment, but the text may provide ironic signals with regard to sexual desire on the part of the television reporter. Brian Pronger notes that

Given the patriarchal heterosexual significance of masculinity, it can have a special meaning for gay men. [...] Gay men can come to see that the power relations for which the semiotics of masculinity and femininity constitute a strategy have little to do with their lives. The meaning of masculinity, consequently, begins to change. Although masculinity is often the object of desire for gay men, its role in their lives is ironic. [...] For many gay men, masculinity and femininity cease to be experienced as what one is, and they become, quite consciously, ways in which one acts. (Pronger 144-145)

In the words of Judith Butler, gender becomes a matter of performance – a doing (p. 33). In his admiration of these street dancers, the South African commentator brought into being the possibility of a male subject desiring the position of a dancer in skirt, rendering open the possibility of an ironic or negotiated audience position. The possibility of a subject not objectifying the dancing women, but desiring their position entails a kind of identification that appeals to our memory and imagination, even if such identification remains wordless.

### **Silent language**

Bourdieu makes reference to such a silent language: to him the body has its own language. A

silent, mimetic relation characterises communication between master and student in physical education, and this silent, body-to-body communication entails a kind of awakening of the body. The body understands, “outside conscious awareness, without being able to put our understanding into words” (1988: 161). What if even the slightest familiarity with a codified game such as football may be recalled by spectators, and that this memory of practice enables those who watch to make aesthetic judgements of performance beyond the mere winning or losing? Would not the bodily pleasure of a particularly skilled shot or swing of the hip count as an enjoyment that is beyond words precisely because it has never been articulated in a spoken tongue, and isn’t it in this body-to-body transmission that we find a guarantee for its unofficial and yet meaningful existence, and that its pleasures will remain beyond verbalisation?

Sports orchestrate the body, producing consent from the body that the mind might have otherwise refused (*ibid.* 167). This consent is manufactured by somatising the body in two ways: The bodies of those who participate in sports are domesticated and immersed in the game so that they forget the necessary element of illusion in the game, and more willingly accept orders that the mind would have rejected. In Bourdieu’s sociology somatisation through sports also takes place by pacifying spectators and rendering them unable to grasp the full extent of their own ideological consumption.

Nevertheless, are there not at least two senses in which audience may produce subordinate and unofficial pleasures from mass mediated sports? Firstly, the inability to completely and totally orchestrate the social enables spectators to draw unofficial pleasures from the open character of signs of masculinity in sports. For instance, are displays of virility meant to deter or invite other men? Secondly, the wordless memory of our own experience of sports supplements and leaves its trace when mass mediated spectacles are made meaningful.

Is there not in such experiences a memory of the body that cannot be fully articulated and therefore never be completely dominated by social orchestration?

The monopolistic capacity of modern sports to define the body and its uses to the masses remains incomplete. Subordinate and silent aesthetic communities retain a degree of autonomy with a capacity to counter the dominant meanings and audience positions of mass mediated sports.

## 9. Conclusion: *The national sports imaginary*

Having now reached the limit of Bourdieu, we turn again to the notion of truth. In this study we have encountered three such notions. First, the view that the world is represented in signifiers, so that there is a referential relationship between signs and the world they refer to. One version of this view is referred to as the “mirror theory” in chapter 2: the idea that representations are mirrors of a world of signifieds, and that mediations mirror events. Second, knowledge and truth are located beyond abstract, analytical systems, such as those offered by Bernhard Suits’s view of sport discussed in chapter 3.2, in the sense that we may know things with our bodies. Such knowledges may never reach the level of conscious articulation, as Bourdieu points out. Sports are practices that automate habits – they produce an automatic form of consent – through a kind of team spirit or belief. We “know”, then, through sports in an embodied, not yet fully conscious way. This kind of knowledge is precisely what Slavoj Žižek refers to as ideological: it is an “unknown known,” which is to say that automated knowledges are things we do not even know that we know (“Atheist”; *In Defense of Lost Causes* 457). This notion of truth is discussed with reference to orchestration of the social body in chapter 3 and 6. Third, Lacanian psychoanalytic and philosopher Žižek proposes that there is a non-subjectivised form of truth – what we referred to as acephalic knowledge in chapter 7 – that is accessible in privileged moments. This notion we find again in Jacques Lacan’s social subject. To the Lacanian subject, truth is a property of time – it occurs as a momentary experience – and it is a necessary component in “symbolic castration”. Žižek explains that

by being filtered through the sieve of the signifier, the body is submitted to castration, enjoyment is evacuated from it, the body survives as dismembered, mortified. In other words, the order of the signifier (the big Other) and that of enjoyment (the Thing as

its embodiment) are radically heterogeneous, inconsistent; any accordance between them is structurally impossible. (Žižek 1989: 122)

However, the encounter between the body in enjoyment and the signifying order also produces a possibility of change for the subject. Žižek points out that the “big Other” – the symbolic order – itself is dismembered, as it is organised around “a fundamental impossibility, structured around an impossible/traumatic kernel, around a central lack.

Without this lack in the Other, the Other would be a closed structure” (Žižek, *Sublime Object of Ideology* 122). The impossibility of such a sutured structure was discussed with reference to the South African regime of apartheid in chapter 4.1, and with reference to attempts to suture an epic body of nationalism in chapter 5. It is by recognising this impossibility – the lack in the Other – that the subject may reach a “de-alienation”. The subject realises that

the Other itself ‘hasn’t got it’, hasn’t got the final answer – that is to say, is in itself blocked, desiring; that there is also a desire of the Other. This lack in the Other gives the subject – so to speak – a breathing space. (Žižek, *Sublime Object of Ideology* 122)

It is in the context of this third sense of truth that I provide an overview of some of the central parts of the study in this conclusion. A discursive approach presupposes that there is a realm of elements – signifieds – that, through a process of articulation are converted into moments of discourse. This process is discussed in further detail in chapter 3. The body, then, is a product of articulation, and in this study the emphasis has been on the body as a site for the national-sport nexus. Nations and sports variously express themselves through the body, and the relations between these discourses is contested and changing. Chapter 5.1 shows how a South African nation in the making and various contenders, such as commercial vendors and a notion of an autonomous cultural field of sports, vied for a stake in the new South African

body, as it was expressed through the 1998 Football World Cup. Chapter 6 discusses the possibility of a novel body, situated in the wake of the epic, national body described in the previous chapter. This new body brings the promise of a stricter autonomy to sports and it is articulated as “healthy”, “natural” or even “authentic”. The struggle over the body is again central to the discussions in part III. In the two chapters that make up this part the emphasis is on the capacity of mass mediated sport to produce a particular kind of body, how does it trigger, contain and regulate desire (chapter 7) and what are the possibilities for a physically passive subject to enter into a process of “de-alienation” from spectacular sports (chapter 8)?

After some concluding remarks that intend to bring to bear questions of signification on discipline, Bourdieu’s concept of *illusio*, nationalism and sport, I will summarise some key concepts and arguments that run throughout the work and signpost where these ideas are discussed at greater length.

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In London – one of the capitals of world football – one inevitably encounters the signature icon of the London tube – “Mind the gap” – illustrated by a red circle crossed by a blue horizontal bar. The abundant significations, or polysemic character, of this slogan include a reminder of the different levels of significations, as if saying, “Be aware that there is a lag between signifier and signified.” This is a primary insight of de Saussure’s 1916 *Course in Linguistics* which announced that the Sign was split into these elements, illustrated by the formula “S/s,” or signifier over signified. This gap informs the discussion of Lacan’s “The agency of the letter in the unconscious since Freud”, where he noted that “the signifier and the signified [are of] distinct orders separated initially by a barrier resisting signification” (“Agency” 148), insisting that the “topography” of the unconscious is structured like a language, and “defined by the algorithm: S/s” (ibid. 163).<sup>117</sup> The bar resisting signification

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<sup>117</sup> It is also in this essay that he mounted his attack on what he referred to as the “sociological poem of

constitutes a site or moment beyond comprehension, but also an *apeiron* that enables polysemy or a multiplicity of meanings attached to the same element.<sup>118</sup>

By minding the gap between the train and the platform on the London tube, one may be reminded of the lag between basis and superstructure or use value and exchange value, illustrated by the vast difference in pricing between the elite players of London football clubs and their unpaid colleagues in amateur leagues, the variety of prices on football equipment, and the use of certain football profiles to enhance the exchange value of certain products without adding anything to their use value. If this kind of analysis disregards the fact that the attachment of a certain player to a product may add pleasure and symbolic capital, and consequentially to its use value to a consumer who appreciates this player and who would experience benefits from purchasing and making use of this product among her or his peers, it is nevertheless the case that the product and the player brought in to market it becomes associated with its user in distinct ways, and that the meaning of the product can only by metonymy be articulated with the endorsing player. Björn Borg briefs do not, for example, include an actual part of the former professional tennis player, but are associated with him merely by metaphor, and an active imagination on the part of the reader or consumer.

It is this gap in signification which facilitates different readings of the same utterance, making it impossible to arrive at a final suture of meaning, or an objective perspective, or truth, beyond subjective reading experiences. Polysemy also lays the ground for the political, in that it enables the possibility of at least two different meanings of every single word and concept, opening the way for a split in meaning, and ensuing attempts at hegemonising the meaning of words and concepts (see the discussion of discourse and articulation in chapter 3), most strikingly, perhaps, in the discussion over “democracy” in the international political

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the *autonomous ego*,” (“Agency” 171) productive of the notion of individual identity.

<sup>118</sup> For a discussion of the *apeiron* or Absolute as constituting a limit to comprehension, see chapter 3.

arena, or over justice in sports.

If nationalisms are considered as discourse formations, since they are composed of “gestative political structures”<sup>119</sup>, they are in themselves made up of webs of significations that are hegemonically related to each other.<sup>120</sup> Nationalism’s engagements with other discourse formations, such as those of football and the field of class relations, receive their meanings by hegemonic processes that operate in and through the entanglements and interstices of these fields. Football as a form of social practice has a different meaning when articulated with nationalism from when it is hegemonised by large discourse operators of the economic field, such as major manufacturers of sports equipment,<sup>121</sup> and these meanings are not intrinsic to either field or discourse, but produced by their mutual engagements. If football has a meaning that is wholly autonomous of nationalism and the economic field, such an independence of neighbouring discourses is ideal and almost impossible to imagine. Every football has a history of production and each participant puts in time, his body and a considerable libidinal investment in a game and its gestures in ways that connect it to discourses beyond the immediacy of football practice *strictu sensu*. A commercial for an alcoholic beverage can draw on the memory of playing or watching football, in an attempt to associate the movements of football, acquired through hours of tedious and pleasurable practice, with the beverage in order to increase sales and revenue for the company. The game may also be associated with the signifier of the nation, its flag or anthem through innumerable articulations on national television, or through endless reminders in official settings such as through the national physical education curriculum in schools.

If the signified constitutes the site where unconscious elements float while awaiting

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<sup>119</sup> This phrase is discussed within the context of discursive subject positions in chapter 3.

<sup>120</sup> Discursive activities are practices invested with powers to control, select, organise and distribute subjects and objects, criteria for knowledge and methods, practitioners and various forms of capital.

<sup>121</sup> See, e.g. the commercials featuring the logo of a major sports vendor and the word “football”.



the partial fixing in a conscious moment, a prime football location such as the stadium offers itself as both a place in which elements of football are codified into scores, the movements of players interpreted and acted upon by their team mates, opponents, officials, spectators, vendors, and so on, but also as a space in which the preconscious ego defends itself. The stadium is the site in which the ego attempts to hegemonise the “I”, attempting to dislocate him or herself from others which are constituted as outside the self, alien to it, and serving as objects onto which the “I” can later project its wishes, desires, and failures. To Lacan the stadium is the site in which the fiction of the “I” is established as a fortress, producing a succession of fantasies that culminates in an image of a total and sutured body, and ushering in the entrance of the subject into the symbolic order (“Mirror stage” 4). The stadium hosts the intermediate stage in the formation of the “I”, after and beyond the hysterical repressions of a fragmented body, but also making possible the ego’s paranoiac alienation, and the possibility of its loss or transversal into the imaginary and an experience of “imaginary servitude” (“Mirror stage” 7).<sup>122</sup> It is here the fantasies of the “I” are established, such as the constitutive other, the mythological trappings of an autonomous ego, and its corresponding values.

The most suitable analogy for football is a matter that should be thoroughly considered. Should football be signified as a drama set on the unconscious mirror stage and producing the fantasies required by a fictional “I”, including a limited number of set pieces or characters, narratives and firmly composed, and yet open-ended dramaturgy?<sup>123</sup> Or should it be considered as a game, perhaps more in the vein of chequers or chess, defined by its rule

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<sup>122</sup> “The mirror stage is a drama whose internal thrust is precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation – and which manufactures for the subject, caught up in the lure of spatial identification, the succession of phantasies that extends from a fragmented body-image to a form of its totality that I shall call orthopaedic – and, lastly, to the assumption of the armour of an alienating identity” (Lacan “Mirror stage”: 4). Lacan’s notion of the mirror stage is discussed further in chapter 7.

<sup>123</sup> This is Gary Whannel’s view of the game, and was discussed in the context of an epic narrative framing the body of the sporting subject in chapter 5.

book and chief obstacle for winning the game?<sup>124</sup> Perhaps the activities that are referred to by the name of football should rather be grouped with the type of play we find among children, those game-like activities that are not yet as rule bound as chess or chequers, which would enable differentiation between actors' accumulated recognition, or symbolic capital, in accounting for their acts and their outcomes on the field?

The latter approach would include Maradona's infamous goal with his hand against England in the 1986 World Cup as a significant example of how an established, highly regarded and well-versed actor can turn a multitude of elements of a social practice into his benefit. It was not only his skills and recognition as one of the world's premier football players according to Suits' definition that enabled the goal, but also his ability to carefully circumvent the constitutive rules without being caught, as well as his explication of the event as divine intervention after the game, by referring to it as "the hand of God".

Maradona's performance and signifying act stretches beyond the physical confines of a stadium and the constitutive rules of the game. The paradoxical inversion of his own agency – depriving himself of any intentionality in producing the goal – may be perceived as a justification of the goal in terms of the game's constitutive rules, and a way to excuse himself from any guilt in transgressing these rules, but it also served to articulate the event as a kind of divine intervention manufactured in and through its very uttering, or performance in language. The act of God that Maradona referred to came about by his naming it as such in speech.<sup>125</sup> Maradona scored by successfully circumventing of the rules of the game, and by cheating in a way that was not discovered until it was too late, and his explication of the goal

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<sup>124</sup> Bernhard Suits's (8-15) analytical approach to sports was discussed in chapter 3.2.

<sup>125</sup> This type of speech act, referred to as the performative, produces that which it names, the classic example being "I hereby name this ship 'Titanic'." (Butler). Butler's version of the performative speech act is central to the discussions in chapter 3.2 on referees' subjective production, as they are producing in discourse their own role. It is also brought to bear on the performative production of gender and sex in sports in chapter 5 and 8. To J.L. Austin performative utterances were those utterances that were not simply truth-evaluable. They were, instead, doing certain actions, such as baptising – giving name to – a ship (p. 5).

signified it as a moment in which the everyday meaning of the game and its rules were undermined by contextualising the event as a moment in a divine and far more extensive game plan. By his utterance, Maradona indicated that the potential meanings of football stretch far beyond the needs of manufacturers of sports equipment, nationalist discourses, and the interests of a growing global football bureaucracy, and perhaps it is at a moment such as this, when football stands at its head – the “father” of football being knocked out of the World Cup after an unlawful goal signified as an act of God – that it most clearly becomes cognisant of itself and its limits, since it is through such acts that the circumference of the game can be re-established.<sup>126</sup> Far from an act that undermined the game, Maradona’s goal and its contextualisation could be perceived as reinstalling the laws of the game by means of their transgression. Perhaps never more clearly has the ritualistic component of football been played out in the context of a sporting “patricide”.

Discipline, then, may be invoked in at least three senses in the context of football.<sup>127</sup> First, it may signify football as a form of sport practice distinct from handball or ski jumping, for example, defined by its constitutive rules. Football can be perceived as designating only those activities that are pursued in conformity with FIFA regulations, or some other analytical set of rules.<sup>128</sup> In this sense, Maradona’s goal would fall outside the definition of football, and should not properly be an object of enquiry into the game. However, in a second sense, it is precisely through such acts that football establishes itself as a field of knowledge and practice. As academic disciplines order and disseminate knowledges, football appears differently to a sociologist than it does to an anthropologist, physiologist, or psychologist. In a sociological sense football includes not only the game’s constitutive rules, but also its players, spectators,

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<sup>126</sup> To Georges Bataille it was precisely through such sacred acts that the profane world could discover and reassert itself (pp. 69-74). The question of transgression – the excessive – as constitutive of order in Bataille is discussed in chapter 6.

<sup>127</sup> See also discussion of discipline in the introduction and chapter 3.

<sup>128</sup> Suits pp. 8-15. See chapter 3.2.

administrators, sponsors, representatives of the mass media, as well as rules, stadiums and other kinds of infrastructure, an esoteric history of records, a political philosophy.

As a social field of practice football offers specific forms of cultural capital that can be converted into political power or economic gains by trafficking with adjacent fields, such as nationalism or the field of class relations.<sup>129</sup> Disciplines are systems in the control and production of discourse and as such are apparatuses of knowledge and forms of power. The engagement in football produces vastly different gains in social and cultural capital to, say, a sociologist or an amateur player. Cultural analysts of sport are located in a matrix of differently valued practices within their professional field, and these differences produce distinct symbolic and economic outcomes. Players and scholars produce different kinds of knowledges *of* the body, even if these knowledges are situated partly *in* the body.

If not wholly distinct from these two senses of the word, discipline may also signify the acquisition of practical mastery, and disciplined practices of football include those of sociologists, amateur players, administrators, and so on, as their engagements in the game are productive of dispositions that provide recognition as actors in the game and empowers them to participate in the selection and control of practitioners and their discursive activity. Disciplined action entails a silent exercise of power in the body of the performer. The movements and dispositions necessary to engage in football are recognised also by spectators, who may well imagine their participation in a game by miming body movements acted out on by players on the pitch, or by making judgements of the skill or competence of players. This kind of knowledge with the body, or a knowledge that is pre-verbal and situated in the body is produced by sports as practices in which skills, i.e. its languages and dialects of practice, are acquired through *mimesis*, or by imitating other and more accomplished practitioners. To be a

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<sup>129</sup> The term cultural capital is discussed in the introduction and returns as central to the conceptual toolbox in chapter 3 and throughout the analyses in parts II and III as a response to questions such as how various sports signify class and gender, etc.

disciplined football practitioner includes the ability to skilfully communicate in a language in which meaning to a large extent is exercised silently, or “body to body”.<sup>130</sup>

An understanding of football that only includes those practices that are performed by way of its constitutive rules fails to acknowledge the element of *illusio* that is necessary to get involved in the game and to attain a practical mastery of its rules. The player has to forget that it's only a game, and that, as a game, it always contains the possibility of referring to something else, and contain an analogous relation to a different field of activity. The twin elements of a silent, mimetically acquired language and *illusio* makes football a premier site to disseminate officialising discourse. Football offers a global language with specific ways of ordering the body, producing durable dispositions to act, and soliciting from it – perhaps as an effect of the joy one may experience through practice – a consent which the mind might otherwise refuse. The kind of preconscious communication that takes place in football produces it as a means by which society may be symbolised, orchestrated, and, in effect, domesticated and somatised. These effects are discussed in chapter 2, where the body is considered as a site for silent and preconscious communication, and returns to inform the discussions in chapter 3, 3.2, and 6,

Nationalisms are among those officialising discourses that are embedded in football. As Gellner pointed out, national attributes are considered as naturally attached to human beings as are a nose and two ears<sup>131</sup>, and football as productive of dispositions to act, think and perceive disseminate nationalisms as embodied practices. Nationalisms as discourses promoting the objective or pre-discursive existence of specific nations are entrenched in the bodies of practitioners of football through school curricula and voluntary sports. The

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<sup>130</sup> For a further discussion of *mimesis* and dispositions, see chapter 3. The notion of sports as sites for silent communication is central to the theoretical discussion in chapter 3 and 3.1 on the subject in Bourdieu, chapter 6 on the “authentic” body of sport and physical education, and chapter 7 on sports as vehicles for social orchestration and the production of a tacit consent.

<sup>131</sup> Ernest Gellner's view of nationalism is discussed in chapter 4 and as part of sport's capacity to naturalise social relations in chapter 3.

articulations of national associations that organise the game hold hegemony over its code of practice, and negotiate with governments and actors in the field of class relations.

Nationalisms are also major components in football as a form of media spectacles for the masses, such as the World Cup, when billions of citizens around the planet associate themselves with players competing on behalf of particular nations, and, aroused by the *illusio* that enables football to be perceived as something else and more real than a game, adapt and silently consent to values and significations that are loaded onto football as popular practice and mass spectacles.

Along with enterprises in the economic field and the official bodies of football, nationalisms struggle to define the meanings and values that are entrenched in the body through practice. If football emerged as a field of practice that overhauled and rationalised vulgar games into pass-times for the elite, it was modelled after a particular element of larger society, namely the army, and in accordance with the need of imperial Britain's upper class to produce disciplined bodies imbued with a will to win – even if such a will would be circumscribed by a set of strict rules that served to remind its participants to maintain the rôle distance appropriate to an aristocratic disposition to sport – it returns as a form of mass spectacle and popular practice that in itself forms a model of an ideal state of affairs in society *in toto*. The element of *illusio* that is added on its return as a popular activity produces football as a vehicle to disseminate and domesticate values and meanings. Within the doxa, or hegemonic signification of football as a social practice, it provides a model of society as it is or should be, in the sense that it plays out a dominant perception of social practice as characterised by competitive activities that are bound by rules provided by governments and non-governmental organisations, determined by so-called market mechanisms (which, translated to the field of football, make scores and tournament results meaningful as abstract

or objective measures of the skills or qualities of each team), and acted out within a teleological and hierarchical narrative, so that each competition culminates in the naming of a single winner over and above a range of competitors that are assigned their rank hierarchically and in accordance with the numerical outcome of their total performance in the competition.<sup>132</sup>

With its immense popularity both as a popular practice and in the form of spectacle for the masses, football constitutes a prime arena for officialising discourses, or discourses which seek to transform private, particular interests into “collective, publicly avowable, legitimate interests”.<sup>133</sup> In its popularisation phase football served to legitimate as official and preferred a body that was tailored to suit the interests of imperial Britain’s ruling class by producing a body that would acquire the dispositions necessary for soldiery and would be inclined to embrace the leisured classes’ approach to sport as disinterested amateurs, and the rôle distance required to consent to posit sport as an area of cultural production exempted from the rules that govern other parts of the economic field, and instead designating it as a field that should serve as a model to society as a whole. Interests which had been private and particular, such as the need to delineate certain sections of society from those inhabitants who are inscribed as outsiders or threats to the social order, become intrinsic to the game itself, serving to manufacture a game in which all of society must be protected from these social outsiders, hooligans, criminals, drug addicts, and so on.<sup>134</sup> The official bodies of football lubricate the game with the values of the dominant fraction of the dominant class by adopting a morality of health associated with the new bourgeoisie and designating as official and legitimate a body that is “natural” and “pure” by excluding a whole set of practices that could improve performance. As a field of labour the official bodies’ insistence on the rôle distance associated

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<sup>132</sup> See Fjeld. “Soccer Rites”, for a further discussion of sport as a model for society, rather than the historicist notion of a reverse relationship.

<sup>133</sup> The term officialisation is discussed in chapter 5 as a way to explain how certain social relations are embodied and naturalised through sports. Officialising discourses returns as a topic in chapter 7 on social orchestration through spectacular sports.

<sup>134</sup> Alterity is a topic of chapter 7, where sports are seen as tools to encapsulate the healthy and orderly.

with the amateur past of football puts at a disadvantage those with an instrumental relation to their bodies and those who are disposed to take up a profession even if it may cause damage to their health.<sup>135</sup> Finally, the official narrative of football manufactures a dimorphic body that is supplemented by a set of unofficial binary codes for gendered behaviour and appearance, and a heteronormative structure of desire.<sup>136</sup>

While the disciplined, mimetic character of communication in sport entails a *dressage* of the body, by manufacturing a body that concedes to the meanings and values of football even if the mind would have refused, it may also effect a particular kind of awakening of consciousness that takes place in and through the body. As a symbolic gymnastics football “always contains something ineffable, [...] something which communicates, so to speak, from body to body, i.e. on the hither side of words and concepts, and which pleases (or displeases) without concepts”,<sup>137</sup> and it is this particular kind of understanding that may be raised to the level of consciousness and enable the performer to grasp the state and character of the sporting body and its context in a way that escapes symbolisation.<sup>138</sup> While football serves as a powerful vehicle to order the body and its desire it may, perhaps ironically, produce a body with a heightened awareness of its own limits, needs, and desires, and with an expanded capacity for knowing the truth of desire.

The stadium may, then, serve as an ambiguous sign to the body of football. On the one hand it features as a site for the preconscious defence of the ego, where those fantasies are manufactured that bolster the ego. and seeks to produce an impermeable armour that will

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<sup>135</sup> See chapter 5 for an outline of the official, national body that is produced through football. Chapter 7 discusses how the gentlemanly code of “fair play” in effect privileges what Bourdieu refers to as the “macrobiotic cult of health.”

<sup>136</sup> Chapter 5 and 7 discuss conditions under which the dominant order of sex, gender and desire may be destabilized.

<sup>137</sup> Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* 2. The pre-symbolic element of communication in sport is discussed further in chapter 3 and chapter 6.

<sup>138</sup> Perhaps it is precisely this kind of understanding Lacan refers to when he notes that “I think where I am not, therefore I am when I do not think” (Lacan, “Agency”: 166).



protect it from questions of its sutured and total character and will enable its entrance into the symbolic order. On the other hand, the stadium may be the site for liminal experiences, such as when a football player is sent off the pitch and barred from playing, or a performer suffers an injury ending her or his career, which could bring about the kind of “subjective destitution” effected by the loss of a fundamental fantasy and the type of “full speech” in which subjective truth reverberates.<sup>139</sup> It is through such a loss and by the experience of a world that is shaken in its very basic structures that the subject may transverse the membrane or hymen<sup>140</sup> that shields the symbolic order from the realm of the imaginary that precedes and envelops it.

It is this “actual experience of truth” (Lacan, “Agency” 151) that enables an acute awareness of the gap that divides the signifier from the signified and the symbolic from the realm of the imaginary, or that which has not yet been symbolised. While this bar enables the silent, pre-symbolic communication in sport, it also facilitates an experience of the ineffable, and a type of knowledge that only the body can hold. It is through this gap that the subject can never fully come to terms with their desire but must remain chasing it, like a football team that persists in pursuing experiences of community, accomplishment and overcoming.

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<sup>139</sup> Chapter 7 discusses how football, as spectacles for the masses, produce such fundamental fantasies and whether it may be possible for the spectator to experience the kind of loss or trauma by apprehending mediations of sport as mistaken objects of desire.

<sup>140</sup> To Jacques Derrida the hymen represents a domain of undecidability, or a location in which it is possible to speak of difference and, hence, politics. The hymen is neither inside nor outside, and yet it doubles as both distinguishing between the two and performing a synthesis or fusion. “It is the difference between the two that is no longer functional. [...] What is lifted, then, is not difference but the different, the differends, the decidable exteriority of differing terms. Thanks to the confusion and continuity of the hymen, and not in spite of it, a (pure and impure) difference inscribes itself without any decidable poles, without any independent, irreversible terms” (*Dissemination* 209-10). The hymen comes to represent a term through which it may be possible to shift from a binary logic or space of positions to a realm of radical undecidability.

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## **Appendix: Key concepts and arguments**

### **Relative cultural autonomy**

Both Bourdieu and discourse theory claim there is a relative autonomy of cultural practices. In this regard they variously oppose the economic determinism associated with Althusser's notion that the economic base determines the social superstructure in the last instance. This reintroduces politics because articulations are no longer wholly reducible to the economic field. In the discourse theory of Laclau this is called hegemonic articulation, borrowing from Gramsci, indicating that there is no direct representation of an infrastructure (base or the realm of "signifieds"), but that its presentation in discourse is the result of contingent, non-necessary articulation.

In Bourdieu classes are contested and constructed through struggle over "legitimate visions of the world" and not substantial entities given in reality.<sup>141</sup> With Hall these views can be enlisted in a critique of the mirror theory of representation: the belief that mediations are simply mirrors of pre-discursive, external events. Since mediations are themselves events – and any event requires mediation to appear to us – there can be no final anchorage outside discourse. This is what Laclau refers to as the discursive being co-extensive with the social. Chapter 3 discusses the relations between discourse theory and Bourdieu's notion of (the relative autonomy of) fields in greater detail. Practical applications of the tension between structure and autonomy in the context of the body is the topic of part II, while part III situates the tension within spectacular sports.

### **Kinds of knowledges**

The kinds of knowledges engendered through the disciplinarity we associate with scholastic

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<sup>141</sup> Swartz 147. See the discussion on subjectivity in chapter 3.1 for a fuller discussion of substantialism.

studies need to be supplemented by an understanding of actors' *modus operandi*: how they respond in the face of “practical choices”. This is what Bourdieu refers to as overcoming the impasse between subjectivism and objectivism. After objectifying the structuring structures organising a cultural field, the structured propensities of actors – their dispositions to act in particular circumstances – are reintroduced. Sports serve as useful illustrations of how the practical knowledge of actors, such as referees, supplement knowledges acquired through scholastic objectification. Part III introduces a third kind of knowledge – a non-subjectivised type of truth – that is accessible in privileged moments. The attainment of this kind of knowledge offers the possibility of a “de-alienation” of the subject.

### **Embodied belief**

The type of silent communication engendered through the acquisition of skills in sport carries the implications of a whole system of belief that is automatised and maintained at the level prior to discursive articulation. The *dressage* entailed by the practical mastery of sports inculcates a form of belief in subjects: as such sports are practices where much communication takes place silently and never reaches the level of conscious awareness. The notion of a silent form of consent is discussed in conjunction with social somatisation and the subject in Bourdieu in chapter 3 and 3.1, in in the context of a new, “authentic” body in chapter 6.

### **Messianic time retained in nationalist narratives**

Bourdieu generally associated nations with institutions and organised by states. In order to understand nations as discourses this study has turned to the writing of Benedict Anderson, who proposes that nations are constructed – imagined – social communities that respond to

particular social events, such as the distance between rulers and ruled in the colonies in the Americas and the mass dissemination of newspapers and books in the vernacular following from the emergence of print-capitalism. Nationalism as a historical period was a force to oppose and end imperial domination (chapter 4).

In Anderson's view the advent of nationalism entailed a novel concept of time. In opposition to earlier dynastic and religious regimes – which were marked by “prefiguration and fulfilment” – nationalism enabled “simultaneity across time” or “transverse” time. This means that events could happen simultaneously in, say, Buenos Aires and Madrid, and that events in the colonies no longer occurred as an effect of, and dependent upon, events in the imperial centre. This study shows how nationalist narratives make use of Messianic time – the time-conception marked by “prefiguration and fulfilment” – in an attempt to narrate a distinct break with the past. Such was the case with South Africa's transmission of the 1998 Football World Cup on national television (chapter 4.1 and 5.1).

### **The body of nationalism framed as epic**

As the body of nationalism disseminated through sports has been configured as an epic body, it is heteronormative and naturalises the virtues and body-relations associated with the dominant fractions of the dominant class at the moment of its popularisation. As such it is a legitimating narrative for a society based on competition and values of individualism, as the case study of South Africa's participation in the 1998 Football World Cup shows (chapter 2, 5 and 5.1).

### **A new “authentic” body of globalised sports**

As the cultural field of sports achieves greater autonomy it can place a further emphasis on

constitutive aspects of their practices that decreases the founding character of nations in the formation of the performer. Evidence from the Norwegian schools' Physical Education curriculum and mass mediated sports indicate that a new globalised body may take the place of the epic body of nationalism. This is a body that values the “natural”, “organic” and “authentic”: it operates in the aftermath of what Bourdieu referred to as the “macrobiotic cult of health” (chapters 6 and 7).

### ***Illusio* and desire in spectacular sports**

In what Bourdieu calls the “popularisation phase” of sports, they take the form of mass mediated spectacles. The element of *illusio* disables viewers from apprehending the social orchestration inherent in such events, the effect of which can be further elaborated through the use of theories of the mimetic character of desire taken from the work of Jacques Lacan and Slavoj Žižek. Mass mediated sports events can be seen as instances of desire engines designed to structure and trigger the desire of viewers. We ask if the subjective destitution associated with the loss of a fundamental fantasy may enable viewers to recognise what Bourdieu referred to as the *illusio* of social orchestration, and, in turn, the truth of desire. *Illusio* is defined and discussed in chapter 3 and brought to bear on sports as vehicles for social orchestration in chapter 6 and 7.

### **A passive spectator?**

Bourdieu generally assumed a passive recipient of mediated sports, and contended that such events could have a detrimental effect in that they rendered viewers increasingly passive. This has been referred to as Bourdieu's theory of a subject rendered passive, or his “passification theory” of spectacular sports. However, the work of theorists such as Stuart Hall shows that

this is a simplified view of spectators and readers: we are actively producing meaning from the messages we receive, and this meaning-making activity is a necessary component in reception. His theory of an increasingly passive spectator overlooks Bourdieu's own insight into the silent communication practised through sport: it is in this wordless realm of tacit understanding that an hitherto unarticulated realm of meaning may be uncovered (chapter 8).